

ON THE PHILOSOPHICAL TENDENCIES  
OF THE AGE

BEING FOUR LECTURES DELIVERED AT EDINBURGH  
AND GLASGOW, IN JANUARY 1848.

J. D. MORELL, A.M.

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## P R E F A C E.

THERE are several reasons which induced me to commit the following Lectures to the press. First of all, They may be regarded as a kind of complement to my History of "Modern Philosophy"—being, in fact, an expansion of the remarks there made, in the conclusion, upon Methodology; and an application of them to the present philosophical phenomena of Europe. Secondly, The interest they appeared to awaken in the large audiences who honoured me with their attendance, suggested to me the propriety of offering to those who might desire it, the opportunity of reconsidering the subject at their leisure. Thirdly, As I am not likely, from various circumstances, to repeat the Lectures at present, and as I am too deeply convinced of the importance of many of the principles inculcated, to leave them open to misrepresentation, I thought the best way was to let every man read and judge for himself. This I felt to be the



more necessary, as I was obliged, in consequence of the length of the remarks, to omit many passages in each Lecture, and often subject myself, for the sake of brevity, to give an imperfect development of my meaning. Lastly, The nature of the platform upon which I stood, prevented the propriety of applying the principles maintained specifically to the subject of Christianity, and the present state of different sections in the Church. What I uttered from the text, I am persuaded, could not be said to interfere with any man's religious peculiarities; although it is impossible to discuss the question of the fundamental principles of all human certitude, without involving remarks which might be readily applied to the subject of Christian truth. I have now embraced this opportunity, therefore, to append some remarks to the three last Lectures, which may exhibit this application more clearly than I had any right to exhibit it on a purely philosophical platform.\*

\* A public journal has accused me of "wonderfully finished subtlety," and making an "insidious use of unsound opinions." I confess this was the last charge I expected to hear. I have ever felt truth to be so holy and sacred a thing, that I would at any time have sacrificed everything dearest to me on earth rather than be found trifling with it, or using any other than the fullest candour in its manifestation. A philosophical platform, it is well known, is not designed to admit religious discussion; but as my subject necessarily involved principles which were applicable to theology, I expressly introduced as much as I dared, to prevent the appearance

The critical reader will find a considerable diffuseness of style, and some occasional repetition. It should be remembered, however, that the Lectures were written expressly for the *ear*, without any thought, at the moment of writing, of their ever coming before the public *eye*. Those who know the difference of a spoken and written style, will understand that such a diffuseness was not unnecessary. With regard to the phraseology employed, I have sometimes allowed myself the use of the term Traditionalism, the meaning of which, however, will appear evident from the context. The term Individualism is already in use, although

of *insinuating* anything the drift of which was not perfectly apparent in this respect. And who are those who accuse us (for I am not alone in the charge) of "subtlety?" Are they men who have loved truth for its own sake, who have suffered for it, who are willing to stake their worldly reputation upon the manifestation of their convictions? I feel a moral indignation at being charged with "insinuation" and "subtlety," and that, too, by persons who in all probability never know what it was to avow in their lives a sentiment contrary to those for which they are praised and rewarded by public opinion. And yet these are the very men who talk loudest about the right of private judgment. Little do they think, when once the world is awake enough to act upon their own doctrine, how eager they will be to catch at the very principles we have laboured honestly, openly, and not "*insidiously*," to establish, in order to save their faith and their Churches from the desolations of Rationalism. If I speak strongly, I hope to be forgiven. For the first time in my life, I have been accused of moral dishonesty in the expression of my views and sentiments upon the great questions of human interest. Christ was angry at the Scribes and Pharisees; and who is not, when men seek to sustain their own cause by aiming a blow at the *moral integrity* of others?

in various significations. We always designate by it the appeal to the individual reason in seeking the true criterion of our knowledge. It is otherwise used in a book which we take this opportunity to recommend, entitled, "Elements of Individualism," by W. Maccall—a book which, whatever may be thought of isolated expressions and opinions scattered through it, few can read as a whole without becoming wiser and better men. We should have enlarged much more in the notes than we have done, were it not our intention ere long to discuss the "Philosophy of Religion," in a separate and more complete form.

# LECTURE I.

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## ON POSITIVISM.

IN the Lectures, which we have met this evening to commence, we propose to discuss the chief philosophical tendencies of our age. The importance of the subject in itself must be my apology for bringing it before your attention. Were it not, indeed, for the deep impression I have, that a right apprehension of the first principles of human knowledge is one of the greatest demands of the present day—and were I not convinced that the audience I address contains minds, many minds, which have been as deeply stirred as my own to the earnest search after truth—I should not have ventured thus publicly to moot a topic which, in the speaker, calls for unusual perspicuity, in the hearer for the closest and most sustained attention. I have the greater need, moreover, of bespeaking your candour, from the fact that many of the points which will come before us, are points on which a great diversity of opinion exists, and, in respect of which, great tenacity and even intensity of feeling is often manifested. Seldom, comparatively, are those broad moral questions, which lie so near to the dearest convictions

of our hearts—seldom are the very grounds of our belief in all we hold most sacred—brought before a promiscuous assembly, and discussed on a purely scientific platform. The philosophical institutions of our country have, more commonly than not, confined themselves either to matters of literary and artistic taste, or to topics of practical interest. But such is not the purpose of our present meeting. I appear before you to-night, not only with the deep conviction that the grounds of all truth must be found in the prosecution of a sound, and that a spiritual philosophy, but that the investigations of such a philosophy are at once the most purely scientific, and the most intensely practical, of all our labours; and that the bearings of the philosophic spirit of our age demand, and demand upon our present platform, the most earnest and unprejudiced attention.

In order, then, that we may have a common starting-place, and that the course we have to run may be somewhat cleared before us, I shall state, in the outset, in popular terms, what I mean by philosophy, and what by a philosophical tendency. To have a clear understanding upon these points is a thing of great importance; for we hardly take up a book in the present day—nay, we hardly listen to a literary conversation—in which the term philosophy is not employed in the vaguest possible manner.

So wavering and undefined, indeed, is the ordinary popular acceptation of the word, that we frequently hear it applied to anything whatever which rests

upon clear, intelligible grounds, in opposition to the pretensions of shallow empiricism, or ignorant quackery. Hegel, I remember, in the introduction to his *Logic*, speaking of the extraordinary vagueness attaching to the term "philosophy" in England, mentions a work which had fallen into his hands, entitled "*The Art of Preserving the Hair on Philosophical Principles*," neatly printed in post 8vo, price 7s. The great thinker of Germany, while diving into the mysteries of Being, and probing the deepest recesses of human thought—while regarding philosophy as the science of all the sciences, the veritable basis of all our knowledge—stumbles upon seven shillings' worth of English philosophy, all neatly printed in post 8vo, the final cause of which was to expound the sublime art of preserving the hair. Perchance he might have thought, that the objective tendency had arrived at such a pitch in our land, that philosophy had, in despair, transferred its operations from the interior to the exterior of the English skull. Be that as it may, we doubt whether the instance he cites is at all singular; nay, whether so-called *philosophical* principles are not now invoked for hundreds of purposes, quite as foreign from their proper aim as was that purpose to which the German philosopher here referred.

Another and less vague employment of the word "philosophy," almost naturalized in our country, is that which makes it stand for the whole range of physical science. It is true, that the expression

“natural philosophy” is employed in most cases to point out the sense here intended; but this is by no means universally the case, as the titles of several of our so-called *philosophical journals*, which refer almost exclusively to physical science, demonstrate. And, even when the whole expression, “natural philosophy,” is employed, it immediately suggests the mixed mathematical sciences, such as statics, dynamics, astronomy, &c., to the entire exclusion of the real philosophy of nature—that which explains its origin, its ends, and, if we may so speak, its high and essential *meaning*, as the embodiment and expression of divine ideas.

Another and most unfortunate use of the word “philosophy,” is that which regards it as synonymous with the analysis and classification of the powers and faculties of the human mind. Mind, it is true, is the instrument or organ of all knowledge; so that, in one sense, it may be said that the philosophy of mind includes the entire range of metaphysical inquiry. But owing to the equivocal nature of the term “mental philosophy,” the opinion has gained wide acceptance, that the whole aim of philosophy itself is simply to classify our mental phenomena, and make a kind of natural history of the materials they afford; that is, simply to write down on paper what is pretty familiar to every man’s consciousness already. No wonder that the world should loudly exclaim against the practical barrenness of such a science, and smile at the philosopher whom it hears attempting to vindi-

cate for it a position, as though it were the foundation, the corner-stone, and the main pillar of that majestic temple of knowledge which the ages have been raising, by the instrumentality of human genius, to an ever-increasing degree of perfection.

Of the term "philosophy," many explanations might be given, depending upon the precise aspect in which it is viewed: as, however, what we regard as its proper definition will not be appreciated until we have developed our theory more fully, it will suffice, for our present purpose, if we term philosophy "the science of first principles;" that, namely, which investigates the *primary grounds*, and determines the *fundamental certainty*, of human knowledge generally. Let us dwell for a moment upon this definition. All men have, unquestionably, certain firm beliefs of their own. Arrest the first person you meet on the way-side; question him as to his convictions; get out, by inquiry, the main points of his philosophical creed, and you will find that he believes fully in a universe of order and design around him; that he believes in the existence of mind under some form or other; and that, in all probability, he believes likewise in a Supreme Being, in moral obligation, in an immortality hereafter. These, and many similar convictions, be it observed, are not confined to Christian countries; they are spread over the whole surface of the globe; they mingle up with the faith of all peoples; and though viewed in many different lights, yet we see them appearing and re-appearing



endlessly, through all the parts and the periods of human history.

Having interrogated the person I have just supposed respecting his convictions, go a step farther, and interrogate him as to *the ground* of those convictions. If he be an unthinking man, all he can say, perhaps, is: That his fathers' had such beliefs before him; that he has been taught to regard them as true; and that it is on this ground that he now feels and admits their veracity. So far, of course, there can be no philosophy in the case: the mind here merely receives the ideas that happen to be presented to it, and never asks for any account to be rendered of their real validity. The moment, however, a man questions his traditionary or spontaneous belief—the moment he asks after the grounds on which it rests, and wants to be satisfied of its validity—that moment he begins virtually to philosophize, for he begins to seek some principle upon which the primary elements of his own knowledge, and, by implication, of all human knowledge, repose.

In searching after such a principle, the great question soon comes to light, What is the ultimate and final ground of appeal for the validity of human knowledge? As we investigate the foundations of truth, we find one principle of evidence, of course, resting upon another; we find that, again, resting upon a third; and thus we descend deeper and deeper towards the region of *first* principles, until we arrive at some final ground of certitude, upon which the whole superstructure must virtually repose.

What is, then, we repeat, this final ground of appeal? Where is the firm resting-place on which we erect the validity of our knowledge? On this the opinions of mankind widely differ. One man affirms that, to him, the principle of all certitude is the *testimony of his senses*. The region of sensible experience, he asserts, is the one which alone has an absolute and unshaking validity; here he can move as upon *terra firma*; here he can plant his footsteps upon a basis, which lies solid as a rock beneath him: but once venture beyond the province of plain and palpable facts, once get into the shadowy region of mere ideas, and we are resting, he says, upon nothing more constant than clouds, which, while they impede the vision, leave us at the same time to be the sport of every wind that sweeps athwart the mighty hemisphere of human knowledge. This is termed Positivism.

Another man, looking farther into the foundations of truth, argues, very forcibly and very correctly, that the senses cannot possibly be the ultimate appeal; because, even if it be admitted that they do supply us with individual facts, yet, still it is the reason which first apprehends those facts, then reduces them to order, and, lastly, draws from them all those principles in which our real knowledge entirely consists. Every man, therefore, must appeal from his senses to his reason. Just as the senses, when we gaze upwards on the starry sky, merely present us with a multitude of twinkling gems of light; while reason alone assures us that

they are suns, worlds, and systems; so also in every region of human research, the senses give us merely a vague impression, which can hardly be termed *knowledge* at all, while it is our individual reason which discerns truth, and to which, consequently, we must appeal, as the final judge of its validity.

This appeal, however, to the individual reason, it is argued by a third party, however plausible it may seem at first sight, will not bear a thorough investigation. If reason, as it exists in the individual, be entirely trustworthy, then, why is it that it leads so many astray? Look over the whole field of knowledge—how widely it is bestrewn with the relics of human weakness and delusion! Even those lower and mechanical departments, which have attained to something like certainty, yet have only arrived at this point through a vast series of wanderings and failures; while, on the contrary, if we look to the higher regions of thought, what a chaos of opinion even now presents itself! Where is the man whose judgment has never erred? Where the man who is not at this moment involved in some portion of error? And what becomes, therefore, of the appeal to the individual reason, when it not only fails to answer the claims of infallibility in ordinary cases, but when not a single instance can be pointed out, over the broad surface of humanity, in which it is free from some amount of weakness and delusion? The human reason, then, being proved defective, what have we to do, it is said, but to take refuge in the Divine Reason, and trust to it alone?

The principle of *tradition*, therefore, is next asserted, according to which it is supposed that God himself first imparted truth to the world, pure and unmixed, from heaven. In the paradisaical state, and during the whole period from the first man down to the Christian era, it is said by these philosophers, there was a channel of divine communication almost perpetually open between the mind of man and the mind of God. Here, accordingly, it is thought, we lay hold upon a *kind* of truth which is not subject to the infirmity of the human reason, and which, coming down to us by verbal or documental tradition from the mind of Deity itself, affords us at once a solid basis for all truth, and a final appeal against all error.

A fourth party, however, now appears, who seeks to adjust the claims of the other three, and merge them into another and more fundamental principle. Tradition, he admits, may be of great utility, but to erect tradition upon the ruins of human reason is a suicidal process. If tradition comes to us with the claim of veracity or infallibility, what is to decide upon the validity of these claims? What is to separate traditional truth from the mass of traditional error? What is to interpret the very ideas which the verbal utterances of the Divine Wisdom imply? The only answer to this is, that reason is the judge, reason the interpreter. Deny the validity of reason, therefore, and you cut off the only means you possess, or ever can possess, either of verifying a traditionary revelation, or com-

prehending the terms in which it is couched, and thus reduce the whole of the foundations of knowledge to a chaos, in which no fixed principles of any description whatever are visible.

The senses, therefore, the individual reason, and the records of a primitive tradition, fail to give an ultimate ground of appeal. In this perplexity, we are instructed to throw ourselves upon the *universal thinking* of mankind, upon the *common reason* of humanity at large. Humanity, it is said, is divine; it has to traverse a given course of action, and thinking, to bring to light in due order a given amount of truth, to accomplish by time and labour a given destiny. Under this view of the case, every age, as it emerges from the divine determination into actual being, bears with it the germ of great moral ideas. These ideas form the matter and the problem of the age's philosophy, and what the individual reason has to do is, to seize upon this truth, to strip it of its symbols and its dross, to bring it into the region of pure thinking, and thus finally to give a logical form and completeness to the conceptions which spring up spontaneously from the spirit of the age. According, therefore, to the explanations now made, there are four great philosophical tendencies which need to be discussed, and these are, Positivism, Individualism, Traditionalism, and the philosophy of Progress. It is the development, therefore, of the principles which these tendencies severally involve, that will engage our attention in this and the following Lectures.

We begin to-night with the Positive Philosophy. The term "positive" has been applied to those sciences which are built upon individual facts, and whose whole object consists in developing the laws of their co-existence or succession. Thus, in the science of statics, we observe that certain masses have a given pressure in given directions;—the facts of the case having been observed, we deduce from them the general laws of pressure and equilibrium, so that under any supposable circumstances we can calculate the certain results of any given combination of material masses whatever. Similarly, in dynamics, we observe the facts connected with the motion of bodies under the influence of certain forces, and from these observations we evolve the laws by which, whenever a body in motion is given, we can calculate the forces under which it acts; or when certain forces are given to act upon a body, we can calculate the motion that must necessarily ensue. I need not multiply instances, in order to convey a clear and definite notion of a positive science; the whole idea of it is included in two processes, namely, the observation of outward phenomena, and the elimination of the laws, either of their succession or co-existence.

That there is abundant need for the study and room for the full employment of the positive sciences, and that they have been very fruitful in their results, no one will be disposed to deny. The attempt, however, has been more recently made to bring *all human knowledge* under precisely the

same conditions, and thus, by carrying out the positive principle to its widest extent, by causing it to embrace the science of humanity, as well as of nature, to rise by the pathway of induction to the highest and most general truths.

The grounds on which this attempt has been made may be easily stated. Let it be admitted in the outset (as assuredly it must), that we instinctively seek after *unity* in our knowledge; that the human reason will ever strive, by its very constitution, after some form of philosophy, or of science, which shall solve everything at all accessible to us in its progress; and, instead of leaving us midway in the arduous ascent towards perfect truth, shall conduct us to the summit of the mountain from whence we can take in with one vast and panoramic glance the whole broad region of human research.

Hitherto it has never been imagined, never even surmised, that mere induction from particular facts could lead us to this elevation; so that whilst the positive sciences have been allowed to advance steadily onwards, scattering physical luxury and comforts in their way, the attempt has been perpetually made by metaphysicians, to grasp first and fundamental principles, rather by an immediate effort of the reason, and to seek in this way the unity and completeness of scientific truth.

Now, against this state of things the modern positivist raises two objections. He urges first, that positive science is not sufficiently general; and secondly, that general science is not sufficiently

positive; that neither the one nor the other supplies the great want of humanity; so that between the two our knowledge is left utterly disjointed and incomplete. With regard to physical science, it has never pretended to philosophic generality, it has simply followed its own peculiar investigations, and been content with the fruits it has so richly gathered up on the way. With regard to metaphysical science, continues the positivist, its utter and proverbial uncertainty shows us, that no *real* foundation exists on which its researches are planted. Could positive science, however, be extended, so as to embrace the whole circuit of human knowledge, could it go beyond the mere investigation of nature and take in the philosophy of man, could it enlighten the region of thought, as well as that of material existence, then at length we might boast a science, which, while it possesses perfect generality, yet at the same time reposes upon a solid foundation of plain and palpable facts.

The system in which this philosophy has been embodied is that of Auguste Comte; and, in order to place before you a full conception of positivism in its most approved form, I must present to you a brief sketch of the foundation principles of his renowned speculations. Persuaded as I am, however, that to many of you this system is known already, I shall only touch upon the more important points, and include even these in as few sentences as possible.



According to Comte, the sciences present a regular co-ordination, grounded on their relative simplicity and complexity. The most abstract and the most simple of all ideas are those of number and space. Here we meet with very few elements to work with, and consequently the science of mathematics, both in its numerical and geometrical branches, is at once the first and the simplest of all, the most easily reduced to positive terms, and then the most readily investigated.

If to the conceptions of number and space we add those of force, motion, form, size; in a word, if we add the conceptions which pertain to matter in its vaster or planetary masses, then we have the science of astronomy or celestial physics. Descending from the contemplation of the celestial regions to the phenomena of material agents on the face of our globe, we find the investigation increase greatly in the complexity of its details. Here there come before us the phenomena of weight, of specific gravity, of electricity, magnetism, and heat, of luminous and sonoric media. To this investigation, accordingly, we give the name of terrestrial physics, or physics properly so called. The fourth movement, from the simple to the complex, brings us into the region of chemistry. Here we go from the exterior to the interior and more recondite construction of bodies. Instead of resting content with the outward phenomena they present, we look into their very constitution; attempt to grasp their simplest elements, develop their molecular forma-

tion, and determine the very proportions in which the different atoms enter into each particular body. Having arrived at this point, we now cross the portentous line which separates bare matter from the vast and wondrous regions of organization. The investigations of chemistry put us into a condition for entering upon this complex branch of research with considerable facility. Guided by the results which it has afforded, we trace the first imperfect grouping of atomies into an organized form, and from thence we follow the progress of organization upwards, through the different branches of the vegetable kingdom, till we come within the province of animal existence. Taking fresh courage from this point, we ascend still higher; the various animal tribes are successively left behind us on our way, until at length we reach the human organization, the most complex and yet the most perfect of all.

Here, then, having studied through the human organization, and reached the province of reason, it has been customary to suppose, the region of positive investigation must terminate, and the labours of the naturalist give way to those of the metaphysician. Not so, however, M. Comte. Humanity, he will have it, presents positive and palpable phenomena as well as nature; and therefore all we have now to do is to found a sociology (*i. e.*, a science of mankind universally), based upon the facts of history and present observation, to complete in this way the cycle of the positive sciences, to reduce

every branch of philosophical research to the same method, to blot out the vain efforts of metaphysics from the catalogue of human endeavour, and thus, by the firm pathway of induction—induction, too, from external phenomena—to reach the lofty elevation of general or universal truth.

Moreover, to make this method more determinate and sure, our great positivist has essayed to lay open before us the law of man's intellectual development. Man, first of all, he considers, looks upon the phenomena which surround him with wonder and emotion; through all the regions of nature he imagines himself to be gazing upon the work of some superior being or beings, whom he clothes with the personality and the mental endowments he discovers in himself. This is the *theological* phase of human development. After a given period the notion of a divinity passes away, and men assign a *metaphysical* instead of a divine cause, as the efficient agent in the operations they see around them; creating fictitious ideas like that of power, and the empty abstraction which men call nature. In due time, however, the metaphysical age gives way to the *positive*, in which, as we have said, science finds its true limits, and confines itself solely to the investigation of outward phenomena and their laws.

Moreover, the more simple be the branch of investigation, so much the more rapidly do these three phases pass round, and the earlier is the science complete. The abstract sciences attained their

positive form in, comparatively speaking, remote times. Physics have also reached the same resting-place, and are now, at length, reduced to positive terms. Chemistry and biology are at present passing through their metaphysical era, and are rapidly *becoming* positive. Sociology alone, the most complex of all the sciences, is still involved in theological darkness and confusion. But even this branch, as M. Comte supposes, is speeding onwards in its course. The French revolution gave the first blow to man's belief in a Providence and a God. Since then, the true conceptions of social science, as he regards it, have been gradually progressing; and ere long, he thinks, we shall have to welcome a philosophy which, superseding all the infantile dreams of the world about a Creator and another life, shall content itself with perfecting the life we now enjoy, and which shall subdue the creation to our use, instead of speculating upon the power that first made and now upholds it. Such is positivism,—such the principles on which it is based, the objects which it embraces, and the goal to which it necessarily tends. We must now, in our turn, attempt to examine its principles, its purposes, and its results.

And we must, in the outset, impress upon every mind the importance of not confounding the lofty pretensions of positivism, as we have viewed it, with the more modest claims of the inductive method, as usually understood. Between induction, as a valuable instrument of human knowledge,

and positivism, as a vast system of sensational philosophy, there is the widest possible diversity. For 1st, The most profound students and expositors of the inductive philosophy, not only admit, but even maintain, that there are axioms of a purely rational or *à priori* character, which lie at the basis of all inductive reasoning; while positivism denies the existence of any such rational basis. 2dly, Inductive philosophers admit that their method is not applicable, *exactly in the same sense*, to the higher philosophical questions generally, as it is to mere physical investigation; while positivism makes induction, in its very baldest sense, the only possible method of human research. 3dly, Inductive philosophers generally include the sphere of internal consciousness, as one branch to which a refined analysis on their principles can be applied; while positivism strikes the whole region of inward consciousness out of the bounds of human research, and declares its facts to be mere impalpable nonentities, on which nothing can be built. Against the inductive method, therefore, in its proper form, and within its proper limits, we have no controversy; all we have to do is to test the validity of the claim, which positive science has put forth, to embrace and absorb the whole circumference of human knowledge, and, in short, to make the senses the ultimate appeal for the final establishment of all truth.

To perform this task satisfactorily, it were well

to inquire, first of all, whether positivism, even supposing it to make good its claims, and supposing it to accomplish all it contends for, can possibly result in a philosophy at all, and give that satisfaction to the human mind which, from its very constitution, it requires, in a philosophical system. It is useless to contend for or against a system which, even were it established, may prove to be good for nothing—useless to waste our energies upon an object without knowing what the object really is, or whether it be of any value, should we ever succeed in grasping it.

The assertion, then, which we are now prepared to maintain is this: That positivism, even supposing it established, is not a philosophy, but *the negation* of a philosophy; that it solves none of the great problems of human interest, but simply declares those problems to be insoluble, and, consequently, futile; that all it has to boast of, therefore, is of *not* attempting to do that which other systems are manfully striving to accomplish. Let us prove this affirmation.

By the very terms and conditions which the positive system now imposes upon us, we are never to step beyond the region of outward phenomena, and the generalizations drawn from them. Now, to know a number of individual facts, to store them in the memory, or make a catalogue of them in our books, has certainly a degree of practical utility attached to it, often very necessary and beneficial to the possessor both of such a memory and

such a catalogue. Again, to merge these individual facts into higher or more general facts (which is all that induction essays to do), is somewhat more useful and somewhat more interesting still; but when all has been accomplished which this process can accomplish, it is astonishing how little the human faculties are either expanded or satisfied by it—astonishing how little the memory is permanently supplied, or the intellect really nourished. Nothing can I conceive more intellectually miserable, nothing more bitterly disappointing, than for the mind to be incarcerated in a prison-house of hard, material, stereotyped facts. For the body to be confined in a dungeon of iron and stone, when we are panting after the hallowed smile that sheds joy upon us from the face of nature, this is sufficiently dreary; but more dreary, far more dreary is it to the warm heart and living soul of a man, when, looking out upon the glorious universe of which he is both an image and a denizen, and longing for a healing sympathy that speaks of the holy, the intelligent, the divine—his spirit's gaze is met with a breast-work of stern materialism, which mocks its highest efforts to soar, and chains his soul down to atoms and dust.

As there are two elements in our humanity, as in every human being there is the animal nature, and the spiritual nature, the cravings of appetite, and the yearnings of the soul; so also in the pursuit of knowledge there are two objects to be kept in view, the satisfaction and comfort of the human

animal, and the higher development of the human spirit. Far are we from despising the increase of mere physical advantages, because, in truth, they may indirectly have a great spiritual influence upon the world; but assuredly the first, the highest, the most noble, aye, and the most intensely practical of all the efforts which can be made in the search after knowledge, are those which give to the understanding a calm satisfaction in the plan and the destiny of the universe; which give to the affections objects of inexhaustible beauty and purity, to which they may ever aspire; which give to the moral nature at once a law, a motive, and a centre, to which by the highest attractions it is perpetually drawn. What are mere physical conveniences to these? Imagine a nation, if you are able, on which nature has lavished her bounties to the uttermost, where all her laws are moulded so as to perfect the conveniences of life, where the horn of plenty unceasingly overflows, but where there are no high thoughts or principles at work to guide the reason, to subdue the passions, to elevate the man. Nature may be bounteous to overflowing, but the elements which lie at the foundation of all social happiness, as well as national advancement, exist not here; they are found only in truth, virtue, industry—in contentment combined with progress, in domestic affection, in charity to the human being, and faith in the Divine. I am speaking now not as a religionist, but simply as a student of the philosophy of man;



I am not advocating a creed—I am declaring facts, which every intellectual mind can test. Much as the world has been led away by the bright but delusive schemes of social regeneration based upon mere material arrangements, the truth is daily becoming more evident, that our pathway to the real “El Dorado” of human happiness lies not here—that national prosperity has its germs deep in *the soul* of the people—that the spiritual can and will mould the material into the most just and beneficial arrangements; but that the material alone can never be the basis of moral or national elevation.

Now, the difference between positivism, and a philosophy properly so called, lies just here, that the former aims solely at advancing the *material* interests of humanity, and cultivating the understanding with reference to them alone; while the latter seeks at once to satisfy the reason, and to give its rightful supremacy to the moral and spiritual elements of our constitution. By viewing things only upon their lower and utilitarian ground, every branch of our knowledge is marred and spoiled. We may show this even in connection with physical science. The great boast of the positive principle is, that it has opened the door to the comprehension of nature, and applied her laws to the advantages of human life. Granted that it has done so, even beyond the limits of all human expectation; still is this all that nature was intended to do for the ennobling of man-

kind? or can we say that, having realized inductively the laws of the succession of material events, we have entered the innermost shrine of nature's sanctuary, and learned her sublimest lessons? When we gaze into the starry vast, and see worlds and systems all distributed into beauteous array, and performing their harmonious evolutions, do we think of nothing but the laws of mechanics, and read no glory there but that of Newton and Laplace? When we see the endless forms of perfect symmetry, and hues of varied colouring, so profusely displayed in the vegetable kingdom, do we think of nothing but chemical processes, and admire nothing but the sagacity of Linnæus? Does the complicated machinery of the animal frame suggest nought but animal mechanics, and point us to nothing but the genius of a Hunter or a Cuvier? To the logical understanding, nature, I grant, may present nought but facts, which have to be classified, arranged, or drawn out into laws; but to the higher reason and the moral sensibility it is far otherwise. To them nature expresses a higher order of truth, and speaks a celestial language: and as well may we deny the law of gravitation, or the principles of the reflexion or refraction of light, or any other established truth in physics, as deny that every form which nature presents expresses an *idea*, that every symmetrical arrangement of parts declares an end and a design; or deny that the whole combined, work æsthetically and morally upon the human soul.

Let me take an illustration of this truth:

Imagine a properly harmonized mind, listening to some noble oratorio of Handel or Mendelssohn; and suppose that just when the last dying notes had faded away upon the ear, some learned philosopher were to come with books all bristling with the formulas of acoustics, or the laws of thorough bass, and offer to explain the whole theory of the intervals, and describe the scientific rules by which it could be seen, *why* every harmony or discord was correctly formed and surely contributed to the whole effect. Tell me, would that philosopher exhaust the whole history of ideas and emotions which the soul of music had kindled in the breast of that listener? Look at music only through the understanding, and it becomes a dry logic of scientific terms and propositions; but let the reason and the feelings have their play, and we see in it a living expression of order—a sensible representation of that eternal harmony which all creation breathed forth when the morning stars first sang together, and which even now to the listening spirit sounds fresh and solemn as when it burst forth from the murmur and confusion of chaos.

So it is also with nature in all the vast circuit of her works. Your positivist may talk of facts, and laws, and logical processes as long as he will, but he is not yet within the sanctuary of nature. Her holiest language to him is not yet spoken—her highest ideas not yet reached. Yea, he is just as far from understanding her real life and her

highest purpose, as is the so-called musician who has studied over his scale, and never felt that music can express an idea, can touch the feelings, can tell us in thrilling accents of universal harmony, can soften and humanize the whole man. Let any one look at nature as a succession of material facts, and what is she, after all, to his reason or his higher feelings?—what but a giddy dance of atoms? But let us read in nature the divine tale of her origin; let us see in her works the expression of wisdom eternal, beauty absolute, and beneficence infinitely lovely; in a word, let us study nature as a system of *means*, all speeding onward to their *ends*, and all together pointing to a great destiny in the infinite, and then at length we see the dawn of a philosophy of nature, which, while it lights up the reason, kindles the deepest emotions, and pours a moral significancy over this wondrous world in which we live.

Again, to pass on to another point: If the positive philosophy fails in giving us a true philosophy of nature—still more signally does it fail to give us a philosophy of MAN. This philosophy contains two branches: 1<sup>st</sup>, The classification of the faculties, or Psychology; and, 2<sup>d</sup>, Anthropology, or the science of humanity at large. With regard to the classification of the human faculties, its sole resource is to fall back upon that most clumsy arrangement which has assumed the name of “Phrenology”—a science to which we will give due honour, as having led greatly to the improvement of cerebral physiology,

but which, as it seems to us, breaks through all the rules of a logical division, by classifying our mental operations almost entirely according to their *objects*, instead of seizing upon their essential *forms*, and reasons in an eternal circle, by deriving the faculty from the organ, and the organ from the faculty. But even supposing the arrangement to be true, yet, as far as its psychological worth or certainty is concerned, it is based entirely upon internal phenomena, which the positivist ought consistently to reject; for it begins by pre-supposing the broad outline of a psychology, built upon human consciousness—that is, by pre-supposing the very thing which positivism imagines it to supply. Whether phrenology, therefore, as a method, be right or wrong, the consistent positivist has no just right to appropriate to himself its results.

With regard to the philosophy of mankind as a whole, positivism confines its efforts to the idea of forming an induction from the facts of history, and thus eliminating the law of social progress. We do not deny that this is in itself an important object to be kept in view; but still it does not even touch upon the great problems which the philosophy of man has to moot, and, if possible, to solve. These problems relate, first, to the grounds of human freedom, including the question of evil, both natural and moral. They relate next to the final cause for which humanity exists; for, can we be said to comprehend anything aright before we know somewhat of the end to which it is unceasingly tending? They

relate, still further, to the validity of the human reason—to the absoluteness and imperativeness of the moral law, engraven upon the tablet of the heart; in a word, they comprehend the great questions of man's origin, freedom, duty, and destiny, both here and hereafter: questions, assuredly, which occupy the first place in every system of philosophy which aims at expounding human nature. Question the philosophy of positivism upon any one of these topics, and listen for a reply. Press the inquiry, Whence this wondrous frame, and these more wondrous faculties, which we all possess? What do they indicate respecting their origin? What do they tell us of the power or the principle from whence they came? The only answer you receive is "silence." Inquire, again, What is the end of our being, what the purport of our faculties, what the destination we have all to fulfil in the present world? The only answer you again receive is "silence." Inquire anew, What imports the deep mystery of human life? Why is it beset with suffering, sorrow, and sin? Why are we ever longing, and never satisfied—ever striving after bliss, and yet our bliss is never complete? Again, the only answer you receive is "silence." Carry on your interrogation still further respecting freedom, duty, spiritual aspirations, and immortality hereafter, but in all and every instance alike a dreary "silence" is your only reply. To the spirit of positivism freedom is a miserable delusion, by which we are daily mocked; reason a wandering light,

which, for ages, has been leading men, like the *ignis fatuus*, into bogs and thickets; mankind a mystery, without a beginning or an end—without a maker or a destiny. To it virtue is refined selfishness, religion weak puerility, and the hope of immortality a pleasing vision, of which none but the feeble-minded enthusiast would dare to expect the realization. And yet this is to be called a “philosophy!”—a philosophy of man!—a philosophy that plants itself on the very mountain-peak of all the sciences, and professes to gaze over the whole extent of human research! Alas, what a philosophy of man, which can tell us nought, or even less than nought, either of the destiny to which he is speeding onwards, or the means he has to accomplish it aright! If it be a philosophy, then, verily it is a philosophy which the humblest instincts of the cottager or the peasant might well instruct, as, assuredly, it is one which those instincts immeasurably transcend.

After what has been already said, it is hardly necessary to describe the incapacity which positivism necessarily evinces in dealing with the philosophy of *the Absolute*, as indeed with all the questions which lie at the foundation of natural theology. Here we get into a region far beyond the reach either of palpable facts or abstract laws—a region of human belief, nevertheless, which of all others is the most *real* in its objects and most *practical* in its effects, upon mankind at large; the most real, inasmuch as the absolute cause lies at the basis of

all things; the most practical, because the sense of duty to the Creator is the great source from which our moral sensibilities and all our active powers are nourished. Without this one great thought, as the crown and goal of all our thinking—I mean the thought of God—reason itself stands appalled, in face of the awful blank that stretches out before it; without this thought, virtue is robbed of its last appeal; without this thought, the deepest affections of the heart are blighted or torn asunder; without this thought knowledge becomes a punishment, and hope the direst doom. Let it not be said that philosophy has nought to do with this, the great central point of human destiny. It has much—it has every thing to do with it; for we shall have yet to show that, if our natural faculties and intuitions fail here, the logical basis even of a revelation itself (whose whole authority rests upon the fact of its coming from God) is shaken also, and nothing, consequently, left behind on which hope can plant her footsteps. We conclude, therefore, that positivism is really the negation of a philosophy; to the reason and the moral nature it neither solves a problem nor clears up a doubt: its whole circle of benefit is confined to the advancement of our material interests; and even these interests, which it appears to nurture with one hand, it crushes, sooner or later, by moral causes, with the other. We now come to another consideration.

We have shown hitherto, that even admitting positivism to accomplish all it proposes, yet still it



ends in a most unsatisfactory result ; we must now withdraw that temporary admission, and affirm that the positive philosophy fails of a solid foundation upon which even its own meagre conclusions can rest. That it does not even attempt to explain the real nature of the universe we have already seen. That it does not trace man to his origin, or develop his destiny, is equally manifest. With regard to the phenomena of history, however, it as ventured upon an hypothesis. That mankind has existed historically for some four thousand years at least cannot be denied, nor can it be gainsaid that it has passed through a great succession of phases. The positive philosophy, as we have described, now produces the great law which is to explain the world-problem, as far as man is concerned, namely, that all knowledge in the development of humanity passes through three stages—the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive. To this, no law, no principle, no *mind*, is prior ; to the positive philosopher it is *the Absolute*; for he collates the facts of all history, and of all thought, and comes at length to it, as the final, the most general, the most absolute truth. This law, in fact, is his *primum mobile* ; this law his *causa causarum*; this law his lowest ground of all things; this law his GOD. Now, the law of human progress, on which the whole system we are examining is professedly based, must be either a fixed, absolute, unchangeable law, which has existed self-caused from the beginning of all things, or it

is simply a finite arrangement, contingent upon the will or the power of some previous principle. In either case, or on either hypothesis, positivism, as such, falls to the ground. For, if the law in question be fixed and absolute, then we have at least *one absolute truth*, and one which never could have been reached by induction, because, although induction might have given us the fact of this arrangement as far as our experience goes, yet it never could pronounce it to be either general or absolute. On the other hand, supposing it not to be absolute, then, if we follow back this law as it has been working for the last four or six thousand years of historical record, and come to the time when it first started into operation, there must clearly have been *something* prior to it. The idea of its having been ever in operation is of course negatived by the fact that the cycle is not yet run round; for surely the true law of human development cannot have been working itself clear from all eternity, *à parte ante*, and just have found its climax and completion in Auguste Comte. It were rather too much for a man even of his pretensions, to make himself the summation or consummation of an infinite series. Follow back, therefore, the law in question, to the time when the cycle began, and then, we ask, What power, or principle, or previous phenomenon was it out of which that law emanated? Has humanity been developing itself by sheer fatuity? Did this famous law come by chance? Was there nothing

whatever that caused the world's intellectual life to flow harmoniously along the course of the ages? Was the drama of history all uncomposed, and does man, blindly and unconsciously, without any presiding cause, march onwards to his high destiny in the present world? I ask, then, on what is positivism based? If its great law be an absolute principle, then it is positivism no longer, but gives us a distinct and a metaphysical theory for an absolute existence, a first cause. If it be not an absolute, but a mere contingent principle, then on what is it contingent? I reply, It *must* be contingent on *some Absolute*, which, however, it is the very boast of positivism to disown. We find, therefore, that the positive philosophy, having erected a system of things, having denied its absoluteness, and made it merely contingent, having, in fact, carefully hung its universe upon nothing, without at the same time being willing to admit its necessary self-existence, ends at length in a tangle of paradox and absurdity, which one would suppose might startle the firmest believer out of his blind and tenacious attachment.

We advance yet a farther step in our process of refutation. We have seen, *1st*, That, even admitting the positive philosophy to establish what it proposes, yet the result is meagre and unsatisfying in the extreme to a spirit panting after universal truth. We have seen, *2dly*, That it does not establish what it proposes, since the law which it falls back upon as the ultimate truth of humanity, is

either itself absolute, or a contingent, based on nothing; either of which hypotheses is in contradiction, the one to positivism, the other to common sense.

We affirm now, *3dly*, That the law itself is false historically and inductively—that it is utterly untrue to say, that the sciences pass through three eras, termed the theological, the metaphysical, and the positive, *in such a sense* that one element absorbs the other in the process. The fact is, that all three elements are true, that all three form a part of the natural production of the human mind, and that the one is no more likely to die out of humanity than the other. Were the law, as stated by positivism, correct, then the early ages of the world ought to be the only religious ages; at that period only ought its wondrous adaptations to suggest thoughts of the Divinity, thoughts of worship, thoughts of a creative Mind. But far, infinitely far, is this from the truth. Had the men of ancient times, when they peopled the universe with deities, a deeper perception of the religious element in the mind, than had Newton, when, having eliminated the great law of the material creation, his enraptured soul burst forth into the infinite, and adored? Have the men most renowned for inductive science, been ever the most, godless? Has not one colossal naturalist of our day gathered together from his scientific works a whole volume of passages which point out the “indications of the Creator,” throughout the thousand pathways of his vast creation?

Surely the highest scientific minds are not ever the most irreverent, neither does the knowledge of the celestial mechanism eclipse the notion of an infinite Designer! The same is true with regard to the metaphysical element. Never was there a period in which man's faith in real powers and unseen agencies was stronger than at this moment; so much so, indeed, that the whole tendency even of inductive science itself, to say nothing of the higher branches of philosophy, appears to be bearing us fast onward to the demonstration of a dynamical theory of the whole universe. The truth is, that in the earlier ages of the world, when knowledge was in its infancy, and physical science had made but little progress, the different elements of man's universal belief were mingled together in utter confusion. The physical, the metaphysical, and the divine, were all recognised, but their limits by no means clearly defined; while just in proportion to the real advancement of our knowledge, their proper provinces have been marked out, and we have learned to assign the right cause to all the different phenomena around and within us. Positivists, in attempting to describe the law of human development, have, in fact, simply described the process of their own mental degeneracy. Absorbed in the pursuit of mere phenomena, with their minds mersed in matter, they have gradually torn themselves away from a belief in the infinite and the divine; they have shut out of existence the whole world of realities lying beneath the fleeting appearances

of things around them, and then looking back upon this mournful process as the plenitude of wisdom, have conceived it to be the inevitable law of humanity at large. It is not the first instance, however, and we fear will not be the last, in which men have taken themselves as the fixed type of all wisdom, and fancied that they could recognise in their own system the principles or even the very archetype of all human science to the latest posterity.

In the objections we have thus urged against the positive principle, it is not intended to detract aught from the worth or legitimacy of the inductive philosophy. The true inductive philosopher is no positivist. Although it is no part of his acknowledged business to search into the metaphysical grounds of his inductive processes, yet he admits spontaneously, as the immediate dictate of common sense, those very principles for which the metaphysician contends, only upon more philosophical grounds. Does the true inductive philosopher look upon the universe as a mere vision of passing phenomena? yea, rather, does he not admit spontaneously a real essential substratum, which passes not away with the fleeting appearances of things? Does the true inductive philosopher look upon all the changes which take place around him as mere successions? does he not, on the contrary, admit the reality of powers which, though unseen to the eye, yet are the veritable agents at work through all nature? Does the true

inductive philosopher consider all the parts of organized being as brought into existence for no purpose? does he not, on the contrary, admit an end or final cause to be impressed upon every thing? and is not this principle one of the very lights which mark out the path of his future researches? Finally, does the true inductive philosopher cherish the idea of creation, without a Creator? yea, does he not carry out the notion of causality to its highest form, and end his contemplations in the conception of a great First Cause of all things? But, here are the very points which the metaphysician contends for, and which the positivist denies; here they are, resting not perhaps upon any rational deduction, but springing up spontaneously and freshly from the firm and indubitable ground-work of common sense. Positivism is thus seen to be in direct antagonism to the common sense of mankind. It admits no reality in the world around us, but the shadowy reality of phenomena; it admits no actual cause, which is adequate to the production of any given effect; it admits no final purpose, no idea of an end to be impressed upon the most beautiful arrangements of organized being; it admits no Absolute, no First Cause, no Divinity; all of which are vigorously asserted by the common sense of mankind. If any one pretends to be satisfied with a theory of the universe such as this we have now described, if he thinks the world-problem to be solved on such conditions, then let him nurture his satisfaction and exult in his success; for our part,

we would rather embrace the most improbable of all the hypotheses which have been seriously propounded as a support for the reason, and as food for our faith, than yield our intellect and affections to a system which outrages the one and blights the other.

And yet these positivists, these men of facts, these clear-headed transparent observers, are perpetually reproaching the spiritualist with mysticism. If such a charge be seriously made, we retort it at once upon themselves; for what mysticism, I would ask, is for a moment to be compared with that which makes the universe, aye, and which makes man also, an eternal enigma—a dark mysterious point, of which we know neither the origin, the purport, nor the destination? We believe, at any rate, that if the true order of things and their hidden mysteries be not fully solved here, yet still there is a state of being hereafter in which all will be made resplendent with light and with beauty. But these men of facts involve all things both in present and eternal mystery. They give us no hope of solving the problems of existence here; they deny us the joy of looking forward to any solution hereafter. Clear-headedness, alas! is easily purchased when we cut away in its favour the very questions which perplex us. In this way we may soon enough come to a perfect understanding on all things, for where our own vision fails we have only there to set up a land-mark, and call it the uttermost verge of human knowledge.



If I have spoken strongly upon this subject, it is because I feel the honour and the true dignity of mankind to be too nearly concerned in it, to admit of any vacillation or compromise. We have not forgotten, nor can we soon forget, the moral phenomena of the past; we cannot soon forget the time when materialism, insinuating itself into all classes of society throughout Europe, poisoned the deepest springs of human faith. And now that a better tendency is set in, and the soul's centripetal force has begun to re-act, we cannot calmly view the hopes thus excited cast down and destroyed by a new and specious revival of philosophical principles, which, we had hoped, were buried in eternal oblivion.

We conclude, therefore, that the appeal to the senses as the ultimate ground of philosophical truth must utterly fail. Our senses, it is true, link us by wondrous ties to the world in which we live, they give the first stimulus to our mental powers to rouse themselves into action; they open to us wide fields of contemplation over which we may wander with ever-renewed delight; but they furnish neither the data nor the method of a philosophy, properly so called.

We cannot endure to be imprisoned in matter. Like a bird that is confined from its native element by the wires of its cage, so does the spirit of man flutter and pine to be free, to soar beyond the surface of grosser things into a more ethereal and diviner element. Let not the sensualist mock its

noble efforts ; let him not talk about the *terra firma* of positivism, and the perils of a transcendental flight ; let him rather remember that it is the earth's gravitation alone that renders the higher regions insecure, and that the less we consist of flesh and blood, of bone and sinew, and the more we have of life and spirit about us, so much the less force do we require to bear us upwards towards light and towards heaven. If this be indeed nought but a metaphor, yet it is a metaphor which contains in it a moral and a truth, namely, that just as we give ourselves up to the government of the senses, whether in our moral or intellectual life, the higher regions of thinking and feeling become inaccessible to our footsteps, and that just as we cast ourselves on the direction of our rational, our moral, and what we may most properly term our spiritual nature, seeking all the light that is proffered there, from whatever source, in that proportion does the horizon of our knowledge expand, and the radiance of a divine glory light up regions of contemplation, and of hope, which before lay buried in the mists and exhalations of this lower world.

## POSTSCRIPT TO THE FIRST LECTURE.

IT is a somewhat singular fact, that the “Cours de Philosophie” of Comte should begin to be gazed at with wonder and admiration in England, just at a time when it is sinking pretty much into neglect in the country of its birth, and where its real merits can be far best appreciated. In conversing recently upon this subject with Sir W. Hamilton, he pointed out to me the opinion which M. Arago had long ago pronounced upon Comte as a mathematician—the very point on which he has most to plume himself. He says in a letter to M. Bachelier: “Avoir conseillé, dans le cercle restreint de mon influence, de préférer un illustre géomètre (M. Sturm), au concurrent (M. Comte), chez lequel je ne voyais de titres mathématiques d’aucune sorte, ni grands, ni petits, c’est un acte de ma vie dont je ne saurais me repentir.”

## LECTURE II.

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### ON INDIVIDUALISM.

IN our previous Lecture we made a classification of the chief philosophical tendencies of the present age. The principle on which we proceeded in this classification was somewhat of the following nature. First of all, let it be kept in mind that philosophy can be described as the science of the first principles or foundations of truth. Then the different tendencies in philosophy will evidently be designated by an enumeration of the various theories which men are proposing as to the ultimate test for the validity of their knowledge. A careful analysis, therefore, of the different philosophical methods now in vogue, gives us, as we showed, four generic principles, which have been assumed by different parties as the ultimate appeal for the certitude of what they esteem as truth.

The first of these appeals we noticed was that which is made to the senses, as furnishing us with a body of plain, palpable, and positive facts; upon which (as it is supposed by many), and out of which, the whole superstructure of our knowledge must

be erected. This principle, worked into a system, is positivism.

The next appeal, to which we referred, was the appeal to the individual reason, as being the only interpreter and judge of the truth, which comes to us from any objective source, whatever it may be. A third party, exhibiting the delusions of private judgment, and hastily concluding from thence the entire fallibility of the individual reason in man, have gone to the opposite extreme, and imagined the elements of all truth, philosophical as well as theological, to be communicated by some kind of objective revelation, whether that revelation be primitive, originating at the creation of man, or whether it have renewed itself again and again during successive ages. Then, lastly, there is another or fourth appeal, which is made by some to the common sense of mankind; *i.e.*, viewing humanity as divine, and knowledge as the function of the whole intellect of the race in its historical development, they consider that the last resource we have must be to the best and most advanced thinking of every succeeding age, so that the true philosophy for man is the philosophy of human progress.

The claims of positivism we discussed in our former Lecture, and found that the principle it advocates is altogether defective, both in the view which it takes of the scope of human knowledge, and in the attempt it makes to ascend up to general ideas, through the pathway of mere induction. Our pur-

port this evening is to consider the nature and claims of the individual reason; to see how far it will bestead us as an ultimate appeal; and to investigate generally that subjective phase of the philosophy of our age which professedly builds itself up upon *it* as the real foundation of all truth. This philosophy, be it observed, we call individualism, and the defender of it we term an individualist.

The first thing we shall do, therefore, is to give a brief statement of the subjective or individual principle in philosophy generally; to point out the arguments it has to urge in its favour, and to describe distinctly the position in which it has attempted to intrench itself. To do this, let me assume for a moment the character of the individualist—let me stand forth as the advocate of this philosophy, and attempt fairly to plead its cause.

First, then, it will be admitted by all (except, indeed, any one choose still to maintain the antiquated theory of innate ideas), at any rate, we may say, it will be *very generally* admitted, that we come into the world destitute of any actually-formed and ready-shaped notions. Knowledge, we mean, is not born with us—is not put into our minds all ready digested, as a kind of divine inheritance—is not poured into us irrespective of our faculties and of our will. What we have given to us originally is not truth itself, but an organ for acquiring it—a constitution of mind, or a form of intelligence, which, when stimulated to action, constructs notions, ideas, judgments, reasonings, and conclusions,

by the action of the objective reality upon it, and by its re-action upon that same reality. We will suppose man, therefore, to start from Zero, from a state of vacuity, as far as actual knowledge is concerned, on the pathway for truth. Then, of course, the whole that he may ultimately attain to has to be acquired by means of the faculties with which he is endowed, these faculties combined forming the complex truth-organ by which he has to work, and thus gradually to store the mind both with ideas and principles.

Such being the case, then, argues the individualist, this truth-organ, which we term the individual reason, must be *to us* the originator, the interpreter, the supreme judge of all knowledge. Look at the question in any point of view you choose, and the same conclusion seems equally to result from it. Suppose, for example, that our attention is directed to the phenomena which come to us immediately through the senses; and suppose it to be argued by the sensationalist, that we are simply dependent upon the construction of the nervous system, and the whole sensuous apparatus for this branch of our knowledge. The individualist has his reply ready at hand. "Your sensations," he urges, "do not *constitute* knowledge. They are simply, in each case, the consciousness of the moment. You just feel them while they last, and then they are gone for ever. Knowledge," he continues, "can only result from sensation, when the phenomena it presents are retained, compared,

generalized, formed into notions or ideas, and thus made to constitute a whole body of cumulative experience. Moreover, supposing that sensation does bring a number of phenomena before us, that might, in a certain sense, be termed knowledge; yet still, what is to judge respecting the validity of the knowledge so acquired? Our sensations, viewed alone, we know to be frequently deceptive. Time and experience are often necessary to correct the errors into which they lead us. In a word, it is always necessary to appeal from the mere sensuous impression to the understanding. This alone is the interpreter, this alone the judge, this the only means we have of attaining certainty with regard to the real meaning and import of our sensations, this the only power by which we can draw fixed and solid conclusions from them. Accordingly, reason must ever be, even as regards our knowledge of external things, the ultimate test of their truth."

We will suppose it, again, to be argued by another party, that the certainty of our knowledge must depend not upon reason, but upon testimony. The individual reason, they urge, is found by experience to be insufficient; it leads men into every species of delusion, and what we have to do, therefore, is to appeal from our own private judgments to the testimony of mankind at large. But here the individualist again steps in with the inquiry—"How do you know, or by what means have you come to the conclusion, that we must put faith in human



testimony? The conviction you have arrived at, 'that such an appeal is valid,' is itself a conviction of the individual reason; so that, after all, it must be confessed, that if you have made up your mind on certain points to distrust yourself, and fall back upon the testimony of humanity, you are simply following your own individual judgment in doing so. Admit, as you profess to do, that the individual reason is not to be trusted at all; how, then, do you know it has not deceived you, in bringing you to the very conclusion you have adopted, namely, that human testimony is the great foundation of all philosophical truth? Accordingly, on the very supposition that we must appeal to testimony as our final guarantee, yet this principle of appeal is itself one which rests upon our personal conviction, upon our individual judgment."

Again, we will suppose a third party to advance the claims of some divine tradition, as being the only true and solid test we possess for human certitude, amidst the discordant and clashing sounds of private opinion. Yet, still, the individualist has the very same argument as ever to rebut the pretensions of any such external traditionary authority. "We come into the world," he says, "without any divine marks pointing us to such authority enstamped upon our spirits. If we think at all, or, at least, if ever we inquire respecting the reality of our traditionary belief, or seek for any principle of certitude on which it rests, then it is evident, that ere we give ourselves up to be guided by authority

(whatever it be), the question must have come before us—‘Is this authority safe? Am I doing right in yielding my whole intellectual being to it? or ought I not rather to struggle for truth myself, by means of the faculties which my Creator has given me?’ Now, supposing these questions to be proposed, who is it, or what is it that answers? Evidently myself; my own individual reason. It is vain and useless, then,” argues the individualist, “to talk of resigning our private judgment to authority. No thinking man can do it if he tries; for if he determines to follow the guidance of another, still even then he is only following up his own private conviction—*i.e.*, only acting out the dictate of his individual reason in doing so.”

Wherever individualism has appeared, whether it be in philosophy, whether in theology, or any where else, this is its stronghold—this its last and apparently impregnable intrenchment. It is here, *e.g.*, that the Protestant world has ever stood against the claims of an absolute external authority; here that all subjective philosophy has planted itself, and planted itself, too, in a position which, as we shall hereafter see, it is not in the power of any mere logical reasoning ever to overturn or to shake.

I cannot bring a better instance to illustrate the practical reality of individualism than that which is afforded by the history of the “Abbé de la Menais,” a man, I believe, acknowledged by all, even the strongest of his opponents, to be distinguished

by unusual powers of mind, singular brilliancy of genius as a writer, and an unblemished purity of character. The Abbé appeared first as an author about the year 1818, when he gave to the world that celebrated treatise on the "Prevailing Indifference in Regard to Religion," which at that time characterized almost the whole mass of his countrymen. In this treatise he controverted the pretensions of private judgment with great power, represented the irreligious state of his country to be the natural and necessary result of it, and sounded the trumpet for all to return to their allegiance to the divinely constituted and infallible authority, which had planted itself in the centre of the ancient empire of the world.

Years rolled on, and events rolled on with them. The bitterness of irresponsible power, wielded by Charles X., began to gall the very spirit of a people that had once gloried in the freedom of a republic, and the year 1830 saw that new tyrant, which the blood of England and Germany that was squandered at Ligny and Waterloo had aided in placing upon the throne, hurled from the elevation he failed to grace, and driven an exile, to muse on the rusted and worn-out principles which the age could no longer bear, within the retirements of Holyrood. The Abbé, inspired with the spirit of patriotism, and impelled by a soul burning with the love of freedom, maintained the cause of the people in some of the most pungent and powerful appeals which ever emanated from the French press. But, alas!

his zeal had outstepped the bounds of prudence; he had forgotten the spiritual Master to whom he had sworn allegiance. The murmurs of the Vatican rolled upon his ear like distant thunder, and the books in which he had embodied and launched forth the patriotic fire of his soul, were condemned, by the very authority whose infallibility he had so powerfully vindicated. What was now to be done? Was he to stultify his own reasonings by submission, and betray the cause of human liberty, which he had so ardently espoused, by recanting the principles he had established? No! he saw now that his prior submission to authority was itself a private judgment; that this now came into collision with another and deeper private judgment; and as he valued the last judgment more than the former, he determined to retain his patriotism, and bid the Vatican, if it chose, to thunder on. Upon which the philosophers of France made the very natural comment, "That it was very easy to yield to authority, when the judgment of that authority coincides with our own; but that when it begins to clash with our deepest convictions and baffle our brightest hopes, then it becomes at once a practical question, Which private judgment of the two is the best—that which has formed these deep convictions of our heart, or that which bids us yield them at the behest of another?" Such, then, is the position of individualism in philosophy; it allows that the elements of knowledge may come from whatever source you please, but still, before any of them

become *subjectively* valid—*i.e.*, before they are anything to us—they must be grasped, tested, and received by the individual reason, and submitted to the private judgment; which judgment, accordingly, claims for itself the supreme authority in the search after truth.

Having thus described the nature and the arguments of the individualist principle in philosophy, we must now look at the other side of the question, and exhibit the points in which this principle proves itself weak or vulnerable. And, first of all, it might be urged, What can all the theoretical reasoning in the world avail against the most clear and universal dictate of experience? Experience shows us, that the individual judgment is the most varying, the most delusive, the most inconstant of all things. If this were really the last appeal for truth, then one man's judgment, so far as he has equal information, ought of course to be (and would be, were the appeal valid) as good as another's; and thus all honest minds must eventually be led, infallibly led, to the same conclusion. A faint glance, however, over the surface of human life shows us how far this is from approaching to the real state of the case. There is not a single subject of deep human interest, respecting which you find not men of power, of education, of industry, of earnestness in purpose, led to different, nay, often to the most opposite, conclusions. Even the very same mind will, not unfrequently, vary; and the very same reason, which pronounced this year

in one way, will perchance pronounce the very contrary decision the next. In what sense, then, can it be said that the individual reason is the final test of truth? Surely, if it be so, there can be no real test at all; for that can hardly be esteemed a test which varies with every mind; which leads different men of equal powers into the most opposite conclusions; which even fails to keep the same person steady to the same points through any long course of years; and which, if we only make a sufficient induction, will be found to give in its verdict to every possible set of opinions, however extravagant or however contradictory. Experience, therefore, seems to give the most positive denial to the subjective test for the validity of our knowledge, proving, that if the individual reason be the best we have to offer, then, alas! we must despair of certitude altogether, and stand powerless before the sarcasms of the sceptic.

Not only does experience, however, bring us to this conclusion, but a due analysis of the human mind, and of the process by which our knowledge must be acquired, leads us, it is said, to the very same result. The human understanding, however beautiful an instrument of research it be when viewed *abstractedly*, yet, when regarded in its concrete reality, is always seen encompassed with a vast amount of hindrances and perturbations. Nothing, perhaps, to take a simple illustration, can be more perfect in itself than the human form. Taken as the type of humanity, it combines in itself the most

exquisite symmetry, the most noble attitude, the most graceful commingling of strength and beauty. But now descend from your ideal conception to the realities of life—go amongst the busy crowd of your fellow-men, and how many do you then discover who at all answer to the type you have been gazing upon in the chambers of imagery? Here is an emaciated frame, there a mis-shapen limb; on one side you see one defect, on another side you see another; seldom do you find even an approach to your ideal, never a full realization of it. Now, just of the same kind (it is argued against the individualist) are the imperfections of the human reason or understanding. It is easy enough to assume the individual reason to be a thing perfect in its nature and construction, and then hold it up as a valid test for truth; but the fact is, that our ideal of what the human reason ought to be, is no more realized in actual life than is our ideal of the human frame. Suppose, *e. g.*, we were to start with the principle, that as the human frame is the most noble of all the organized works of God, so every other part of the animated creation must be regarded as just so far perfected in harmony and beauty, as it approaches in similitude to it. How would this principle (supposing, of course, the argument itself to be valid) bear a practical application to every individual case? Could every man take himself, exactly as he is in the concrete, as such a type of animated beauty, symmetry, and perfection? Is it not evident that the individual application of the principle

would land us in the most painful and ludicrous absurdities? Now, just as great, and just as painful, is the absurdity that results from our assuming the *individual* reason as the type of intellectual perfection, as the ultimate test of truth. The reason of man, however perfect as a truth-organ abstractedly, yet, when viewed individually and in the concrete, is beset with every species of drawback and difficulty. Here we find the imagination running away with the judgment; there we see the senses predominant over the reason; here we see violent associations disturbing all the harmonious play of the faculties within; and there we see a false education distorting every feature either into a monster or a dwarf. In the midst of all this, where is the room for the principle of individuality to plant itself? If this principle is all we have to fall back upon, then assuredly truth must be sadly at the mercy of all the temperaments and idiosyncrasies to which human nature, in the detail, is universally subjected.

The argument, against the principle of individualism, however, may be pursued yet a step farther, by showing, namely, the consequences in which we become involved when it is fully and logically carried out.. Admit that the individual reason is our last and final appeal for truth, and it follows that all our knowledge must be viewed simply as relative to the constitution of our own minds, not as having any positive objective validity. The organ of truth within us might have been differ-



ently constructed; nay, it is oft-times found to be differently constructed in different minds; the final test, then, being variable, truth itself must be altogether uncertain; it must vary with the faculties, which alone can judge of it; nay, the word truth can mean nothing else, than each man's own subjective impressions of things.

The case is clear. Reason becoming personal, truth must be personal too; if the organ be purely individual, the product of that organ must be stamped with the same individuality, and all truth will be, as it were, but the projected shadow of our own minds. Carry out this subjective reasoning, and what do we come to? Evidently this, that the individual mind, *the me*, is the generating principle of all human knowledge; that the soul of man is like the silk-worm, which weaves its universe out of its own being; that the whole mass of knowledge to which we can ever attain lies potentially within us from the beginning; that all truth is nothing more than a self-development. The earlier philosophy of Fichte is, in fact, the logical result of the principle of individualism. Once bound up within the circle of our own subjectivity, and what have we to do but to carry on one eternal process of self-introspection, and thus to develop our own subjective laws as the germs in which all the knowledge to which we can possibly attain is primarily involved?

Will this subjective philosophy, then, the philosophy of the *me*, really hold good? The triumphant

reply of its opponents is all embodied in the simple question, "What is self?" "What is the me?" What is the individual reason, if you only lay bare the actual elements of which it consists? The individual reason, after all, is a pure abstraction; no man can ever imagine himself isolated from humanity at large; nor is it possible for us to conceive what would be the pure result of our bare, individual, mental constitution, if we (any one of us) were isolated creatures, in some far-distant planet, with no history behind us, with no prospect before us in the coming futurity. Brought as we are into being, each one a link in the great chain of humanity, can any one say what would be the product of his own individual reason in such a position as that I have supposed? Can any one now say, which of his principles, his beliefs, his feelings, his hopes, his subjective convictions, are purely the result of his own individual constitution? Impossible. Suppose that our minds, with all the individual characteristics which they now possess, had been brought into being five centuries ago, and linked on to the mass of humanity as it existed in Europe during the middle ages?—what resemblance would there have been between our whole mental existence then, and what it is now? It is evident, that there could hardly have been a principle, a belief, a conviction, in common; our individual constitution would have been drawn, as to its practical energies, altogether into another direction, and this not simply from the influence of circumstances, but

from the difference in the whole inward life of humanity—the difference in the whole development of the human consciousness, as it was in the fourteenth and as it is in the nineteenth century of the Christian era.

Or, to take another example, suppose any one of us had been born in the very centre of the Chinese empire, with our individual being linked on to the life of humanity as it now exists in that remarkable country; would there be much resemblance between what we should then have been and what we now actually are? But, if all human knowledge be only the development of the individual self, in its original constitution, then how is it that the development of this wondrous monad, in the case of a Chinese mandarin, turns out, infallibly turns out, so utterly diverse from all we see it to be in the case of an English, a Scottish, or a German professor? If it be true, that all knowledge is individual, and all the mere expansion of the subjective reason, why should not such an expansion of reason as appeared in Newton, in Leibnitz, in Chalmers, or in Hegel, be as natural or as probable at Peking, at Bagdad, or among the natives of South Australia, as anywhere else? Is it urged that humanity is there in an entirely different state? Then, why is it so, unless there be a growth in the race as well as in the individual; *i.e.*, a generic as well as an individual principle at work in human nature?

The advocates of the subjective philosophy, then, it is argued, entirely forget that *humanity* has a life and a development as well as the individual

man; that it has its infancy, adolescence, and maturity, as well as we; and that it is no more possible for the infantile ages of the world, or of any particular nation of the world, to anticipate the age of a full maturity, than it is for the child to anticipate the man. Accordingly, if there be a development of the universal consciousness, as well as the individual consciousness, then this universal consciousness must form one ground of appeal for the validity of our knowledge, inasmuch as it is upon this that the individual plants himself, and according to this that he judges.

Here, therefore, it is supposed, we may find a principle of authority, to which the extravagancies and delusions of the individual judgment must bow, for they may all be tried and tested by the tone, the temper, the convictions, the general consciousness, of the age in which we live. If our opinions accord with these, or if they are the embodiment of principles after which the age is feeling, longing, and struggling, then, it is affirmed, they are sure to carry with them the prestige of veracity; if, on the contrary, our opinions find no sympathy with the intellectual life and consciousness of humanity at large, in its present stage of development, then we must conclude one of two things—either that we are vastly behind the age, or vastly before it. And modesty will generally dictate that we assume the former of these suppositions to be true, unless we have some very extraordinary reasons to maintain the latter. On these

grounds, then, it is argued that the individual reason is, after all, but a portion of the universal reason, and that we must regard the latter as a principle of appeal altogether superior in authority to the former.

The advocates of this view of the case have a strong plea in their favour, arising from the fact, that even in instances where the full right and possibility of private judgment have been openly professed, as the ultimate test of truth, yet the appeal to public opinion, or, at least, to the general belief of men in the same position of life, has always been tacitly admitted and even strongly enforced. For example, the professed doctrine of Protestantism is the right of private judgment in all matters connected with religious truth. But the opponents of private judgment, or as we have termed it, of individualism, have never been slow to point out the fact, that this right is very seldom practically acted up to, or honestly allowed. The moment, they say, a Protestant, assuming the professed right he has of judging for himself, frames a system of theological doctrine at variance with the community to which he belongs, his ears are at once assailed with the "*argumentum ad verecundiam*" from all quarters. The voice of antiquity, the voice of his forefathers, the voice of the Church, the voice of the learned, the wise, the devoted around him—all are appealed to as reasons why he should distrust his own private judgment, and yield it up upon the altar of public opinion. Now, it is

argued, it may be perfectly right, perfectly natural, perfectly in accordance with true wisdom, that all this should take place, that men should yield their own private judgment to the authority of so many more, and wiser than themselves; but yet, when it does take place, it is abundantly clear that another appeal has been substituted for the right of private judgment. That right, in the case supposed, was actually exercised, but its conclusions were immediately rebutted; now it is discovered, that it is far safer to trust to the common judgment than to the individual; in other words, that the authority of the common consciousness of mankind, in these matters, is a test of truth higher than the consciousness of any individual man can ever pretend to be. Such, then, are some of the arguments by which individualism is contested and repelled.

The two antagonist principles, then, may now be placed in bold opposition before our view. The individualist, on the one hand, maintains, that as the reason which is in us is the sole organ we possess for the discovery of truth, every fact, every sentiment, every principle, whatever it be, must come under its cognizance, and be adjudged right or wrong, according as it shall decide. Even supposing some other authority to be admitted, yet it is the individual reason which must decide upon its validity and its worth, so that, after all, it is this which constitutes *to us* the last and final appeal. The opposition party, on the other hand, here step in with the reply, that although the reason we pos-

ness must of course be the instrument by which all our knowledge has to be gained, yet this does not by any means constitute it the supreme test of truth; that so far from this, the individual judgment is confessedly subjected to a thousand perturbations, external and internal, and that it can never offer a ground of absolute certitude, until its own conclusions are stamped with the approbation of mankind at large.

Thus, then; I have presented to you the respective claims of the two systems we have been considering, with as much fairness and candour as possible. I doubt, indeed, whether any one here present, judging by the words now uttered, could say to which side of the question I myself incline. Indeed, were there no third and higher principle into which the whole question could be merged, I know not whether I could ever decide it myself. Both parties, as it seems to me, starting with their respective data, have the full weight of logic in their favour; nor do I believe that, on the platform of logical reasoning, the question could ever be settled either one way or the other. Fortunately, however, our intellectual activity is not confined within the circle of logical processes. The syllogism is not the limit by which the reason of mankind is ultimately bounded; and, in matter of fact, it must be in the discovery of a higher organ of truth in man than the mere logical consciousness, or, as Coleridge termed it, the understanding, that we must hope for the solution of all those great fun-

damental questions which relate to the ultimate appeal for truth.

Before I proceed, therefore, to reconcile the claims to the two systems which have now occupied our attention, I must crave your close and patient attention while I draw, in as clear and popular a manner as I am able, the distinction that exists between the understanding and the reason; in other words, between the logical and the intuitional consciousness in man—a distinction which I believe to be not only important, but *absolutely necessary*, in order to explain almost all those higher questions of speculative interest, which the age we live in is rapidly forcing more and more upon our attention.

Now, we hear nothing more frequently observed and commented upon, in the estimation of human character, than that such a man is remarkable for his logical acuteness, or that he has a great capacity for reasoning out principles into all their details and conclusions. On the contrary, it is as frequently said, that such another man has great *instincts* for truth, that although he was never remarkable for the force of his logic, or the patience of his reasoning, yet that he has vivid spontaneous impressions, and is thus often enabled almost unconsciously to throw light upon the deepest subjects of human research. Now, this kind of observation is grounded in the fact, that the intellectual consciousness in man has a *twofold* constitution; that there is one development of it by which we are brought into contact with the *principles* of



truth—that there is another development of it in which we reason out other subordinate truths by consecutive and reflective argumentation based upon those principles. There is, of course, nothing at all new in this distinction, although it may perhaps yet be destined to be brought into clearer and more universal application. From the very earliest ages of speculation, the distinction has been clearly enough perceived, and conveyed, too, under a great variety of expression. By the Eleatics, for example, it was conveyed substantially by the terms *πιστις* and *δοξα*, faith and opinion; by Plato, it was expressed by *νόησις*, the higher reason or power of intuition, and *διανοία*, the capacity of logical reasoning; and through all periods of the history of philosophy since that time, the word *noumenon*, it is well known, has been repeatedly used to designate “any object which we perceive at once by the higher effort of the reason,” in opposition to that which we gain by sensible experience, or by a logical deduction. You may find the same distinction in the New Testament. By Paul it is denoted by *πνεῦμα* and *συνεσις*, the spirit and the understanding, where, speaking of public worship, he says: “I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding likewise;” *i.e.*, I will exercise my own intuitions in the act of devotion, and I will clothe those intuitions in a reflective and logical form, that I may instruct others also. I need not mention, at any length, the authority of more modern writers upon the question. I will just refer, however, to one of

the most cautious, the most clear-headed, and the most valuable of our philosophical authorities—I mean Dr. Thomas Reid, who remarks in his *Essays* as follows: “We ascribe to reason two offices or two degrees. The first is to judge of things self-evident—this is intellect, *νοῦς*; the second is to draw conclusions that are not self-evident from those that are—this is reasoning, *διανοία*.” Or, if a still later authority be required, and if I may be pardoned for passing by the opinions of such thinkers as Coleridge and Sir W. Hamilton, in whose works the matter may be seen more at large, I will simply read a single passage from the sermon preached by the Bishop of Oxford before the late British Association, held in that place: “The spirit of man,” he remarks, “has gifts greater than the very highest powers of the understanding. There is in him, dimmed somewhat though it be the divine power of intuition. This is that gift of genius which sees the hidden unity, after the discovery of which all true philosophy is striving. For there is behind all that which we term nature, one true severe unity; and to contemplate this amidst external diversity is the especial gift of this highest reason.”

We see, accordingly, from these evidences, that the broad distinction between the logical and the intuitional consciousness, as it exists in man, has been long, nay, from the very first ages of philosophical speculation, has been more or less obviously admitted or maintained; and as I shall have im-

mediately to apply it to the purpose we have now in hand, I must beg permission to enter a little into the real nature of that distinction, and explain the more prominent points which it presents.

And, first of all, we remark, that the knowledge which we obtain through intuition, is *direct, immediate, and presentative*; while that which we obtain through the logical understanding, is *indirect, mediate, and representative*. The difference that exists between knowing a thing immediately by a direct intuition, and knowing it representatively by an idea, conception, or definition, is one which it is of great importance for us rightly to apprehend. Those of you who are at all acquainted with the history of the long controversy about perception, and especially that most admirable dissertation on it by Sir W. Hamilton, are well prepared to enter into this distinction with ease, and with the fullest conviction of its reality. Let me take the case of perception, then, as our illustration.

It was long supposed, as most of you are aware, that we become acquainted with the various objects of the material world around us by means of an intervening image or idea. This supposition retained its hold on the philosophical world for many centuries. And even when the belief in an image or idea, separate from the mind itself, was renounced, still the same theory continued to exist in a modified form. Locke, for example, distinctly held that the mind is occupied solely with ideas; and even Dr. Thomas Brown, although he came after

the light which Reid had thrown upon the subject, yet most unequivocally and repeatedly declares, that we can only know the objects of nature and the world around us, as they are represented to us internally by some state or modification of the mind itself.

Now, let it be observed, that however simple and natural this view of the question may at first seem to be, yet the whole of the sceptical argumentation of Hume applies to it with irresistible force. If we can only know external things by means of some inward representative process, then what guarantee have we that this process affords us a correct account of the objective reality? It is clear at once that we are for ever cut off from the world without, that we have no direct converse with it—that we only behold it as it is shadowed forth by means of our own subjective states. Common sense, I am aware, for ever saves us from the *practical* maintaining of this doctrine; but then, what is common sense? and how does it save us from the folly of false metaphysical theories? Common sense, as applied to this question, simply implies the spontaneous conviction of mankind, that we *do* know the world around us as it is, and that no theoretical refining can ever make good the contrary. Analyze common sense, therefore, and it is a direct point-blank contradiction to the representative theory of perception; it is the unyielding assertion of mankind that we have to do with the objective world, not in its shadow, but in its concrete reality,

and that we are dependent upon no intermediate representations whatever for our knowledge of it. This direct, immediate, and presentative knowledge, therefore, is what we term *knowledge by intuition*, that, namely, in which the subject stands at once face to face with its object, without anything of a representative character intervening. In this respect, our perceptive knowledge differs essentially from that which comes through the understanding, or, as we have termed it, the logical faculty. This latter knowledge is representative; it is the result of an abstract idea; it is communicated to us not by a direct gazing upon the concrete reality, but by a logical definition of it, as possessing certain attributes.

I have been thus explicit with regard to the nature of perception, because it affords us a perfect type or illustration of that *higher kind of intuition* by which we are brought into direct contact with higher or spiritual truth. Observe the parallel.—We possess a knowledge of the external world, and that knowledge, according to what we have just said, may assume three different forms. Either, first, we may have a direct perception of some material object, without taking any distinct cognizance of its attributes; or, secondly, we may know an object simply by the enumeration of its attributes, without perceiving it at all; or, thirdly, we may perceive the thing immediately, and then enumerate and observe its attributes also. Let me take an instance as illustration. I will suppose the

object in question to be a tree. I may stand and gaze at this tree, simply as a beautiful object of contemplation; this is a direct perception—I know immediately that the real concrete thing on which I am gazing is before me. But, suppose a friend describes to me a tree which I have never seen; I come to the knowledge of it in this case not immediately, but by an enumeration of its attributes—its size, shape, colour, &c.; in a word, I know it *representatively*, and the process of representing by a definition, is of course a logical process; so that I may say I know it *logically*. But, again, I may know an object in both these ways at once. I may perceive, or may have perceived, it immediately, and may likewise enumerate its attributes; and in this case, I reduce my bare intuitional knowledge to a logical or scientific form.

Now, the case stands exactly the same with regard to all higher or supersensual truth. I may have a direct intuition of it, or I may know it by the logical definition of another, or I may have the intuition myself, and then reduce it to a scientific form. Take a simple illustration from the science of music. One man has a spontaneous perception of harmony; his mental sensibility is of that kind, that he possesses strong and vivid intuitions of its reality and its beauty. Another man, having no musical sensibility whatever, may, notwithstanding, study music as a science of measure and of intervals. A third, however, may do both; he may possess the intuition, and reduce it by the logical

understanding to scientific form, or to logical terms.

The case is exactly the same with regard to moral and spiritual truth—truth of a still higher nature. If, for example, I possess a strong religious sensibility in my nature, I have, as the result of it, a vivid intuition of the Infinite, the Absolute, the Eternal. Again, if I learn theology merely by rote, from bare propositions, then I have only a logical, a representative, a symbolical knowledge of it, not a real one; or if, lastly, I have the intuition, and afterward reduce it to a logical form, then I have, properly speaking, both a religion and a theology, which combined form a living theology, in contradistinction to a lifeless and formal one.

To deny the reality of the intuition in these cases, involves us in exactly the same scepticism in which the representational hypothesis involves the philosophy of perception. If I only know the external world by a subjective idea, says Hume, then to me the idea is everything, and the reality of anything beyond is purely problematical. So also, if I only know moral and spiritual truth by an act of my understanding; if, for example, I have to reason up to a God by pure logic, then what do I gain, after all, but a mere logical and formal result—an abstract Deity, not a living one? On the other hand, if I have a direct spontaneous intuition of the Absolute, then I am taken at once out of the subjective circle; I am no longer in the region of abstractions; I come into contact with a living

reality out of myself; I have got beyond the reach of scepticism, and am already in the very midst of objective truth. Without this intuitional faculty, therefore, I am cut off for ever from all *reality*. A mere phenomenon, it is true, can be very well known by a logical definition, by an enumeration of its attributes, but not a simple element. No logical definition could ever give a blind man the notion of colour—it could never convey to any one of us a taste we had never experienced; and just so, in higher intuitional truth, it can never convey to us those simple and elementary ideas which lie at the basis of all our reasoning.

To make this distinction between the logical and intuitional faculties still clearer, I may add another main characteristic of it, namely, that the knowledge which we obtain by the intuitional consciousness is *material*—that which we obtain by the logical is *formal*.

Here we may again take our illustration from the perception we have of the external world. Perception can alone bring us into contact with the actual *matter* of the world around us; while the understanding alone gives our perceptive knowledge a reflective *form*. When, by a logical process, I abstract the attributes from any object, and make a general notion or conception, which can be employed to describe it to another person, I leave the matter of the thing out of the question; I only occupy myself with the qualities—that is, with the representative form—since the matter only ap-



pears when I have a direct perception of the thing in question.

Exactly so is it with regard to all truth of a higher kind. The matter of that truth comes solely by intuition; the form is supplied by the understanding. This is the case in all the sciences, for the law is universal. The mathematical sciences, for example, have as their essential foundation the pure conceptions of space and number. Moral science is based upon the fundamental notions of good and evil; æsthetical science rests upon the direct perception of beauty; theological science, on the conception of the absolute personality—*i.e.*, of God. Here we see the procedure of the logical and the intuitional consciousness in the most striking contrast: the one separates, divides, analyzes; the other seeks after the highest unity. The more perfect our logical capacity becomes, the more attributes we can enumerate, the finer the distinctions we can draw—just so much the greater is the number of parts into which our knowledge is intersected. On the contrary, by the power of intuition we make no such distinctions at all, because *it*, instead of gazing upon the forms, endeavours to seize at once upon the matter of our knowledge. Logical distinctions, abstract ideas, formal definitions, here are lost sight of; it stops not to take any cognizance of them, but strives at once to find out what great reality there is, which lies unchanged and unchangeable beneath all the forms and all the phenomena around us. Logic, for example, will

enumerate all the different kinds of beauty; intuition gazes upon the essence of beauty itself. In morals, logic will give us a classification of virtues; intuition alone perceives the absolute good, the eternal right. Logic will classify all external objects, under a given number of categories; intuition grasps the substance which lies alike at the basis of all. These two faculties, then, form the poles of all our knowledge. The one gives us distinctions, the other similitudes; the one tends to perpetual separation, the other to a perpetual unity in a perfect whole. Between these two polar oppositions vibrate all the points of scientific truth.

In this two-fold arrangement of our intellectual nature we trace the most perfect wisdom and beneficence. If our knowledge of the higher elements of truth depended upon our logical understanding, unhappy indeed were it for those who, from their whole position and circumstances in life, are unable to cultivate it. But such is not the case; the Creator has not so favoured a select few as to give them access to those high conceptions and sensibilities which form so essential an element in human happiness, and to withhold it from the mass of his creation: No. To the peasant and the artisan the universe lies as open as to the philosopher; and his soul, if kept pure from degrading vices, can have as deep a sympathy with the beauties of nature as can that of the wise and the learned. In respect of moral ideas, the cottager, in the play of his domestic affections, can have as lofty a view and as

happy a realization of human virtue as can the scholar who has poured over all the lessons of morality which books and theories can teach him. And in regard to religious intuitions, the humblest mind may enjoy as calm a trust in the infinite wisdom and goodness of the Creator as can that of the most learned and puissant theologian. All this tends to show us, that while our logical powers and our formal knowledge of the moral sciences depend upon our mental cultivation, yet there is a class of deeper ideas and intuitions, which come home at once and immediately to the very centre of our being; which form the basis of all true human elevation; which flow as a current of spiritual life through the common soul of humanity, and thus distribute the spring of human happiness equally through the whole mass.

After this long but necessary digression upon the logical and the intuitional forms of our intellectual consciousness, let us return to the main question of the present Lecture, namely, to solve the respective claims which the individual reason and the universal reason put forth to be an ultimate authority or test for truth. Their mutual antagonism I have already presented to your notice; the ground of this antagonism, we shall now perceive, arises from omitting to consider what it is within us which is *individual* in its character, and what that is *generic*, or belonging, namely, to mankind as a whole. A little consideration will make this matter very plain. We have the deepest conviction, that there are

truths often coming before us, on which we are, individually, perfectly competent to decide. Admitting, for example, the axioms and definitions of mathematics to be correct, we feel ourselves perfectly competent to decide upon the truth of any result whatever which we derive by consecutive reasoning from them; or, if any premisses of a logical syllogism are clearly placed before us, we have no difficulty in determining as to the accuracy of the conclusion. These are points of knowledge respecting which testimony is not of any value. Our belief in them would be strengthened by no amount of consent, nor would it be shaken by any kind of opposition. The whole appeal is to the individual judgment, and its decision is final.

Now, it will be seen at once, from what we have before remarked, that these subjects, on which the individual judgment can so easily decide, are of a *formal* character. Admit the axioms of mathematics, and all the rest is evidently a purely formal procedure. Admit the matter of any logical premisses to be true, and the deduction of the conclusion is formal likewise; and so it is throughout all the sciences. The correct deduction of one truth, or any set of truths from another, is always a matter of bare logic; so that we may come to this conclusion, that whatever points of our knowledge come within the region of the logical consciousness, of the understanding, these can be decided absolutely and finally by an appeal to the individual judgment. The human understanding, in fact, is constructed so as

to proceed upon certain determinate principles, which we term *laws of thought*; and whatever knowledge depends upon a simple application of these laws, is as certain as human nature can possibly make it. These laws of thought, or their complex, which we term the understanding, form a fixed element in every individual man; and the testimony of one sound mind in this respect is as good as a thousand. Were not the laws of thought indeed fixed and uniform, all human intercourse would be at an end; there could be no certain method of reasoning in the world—no sure means of communicating between mind and mind.

On the other hand, while there are some questions on which the individual can decide, we have an equally strong conviction, that there are other points of knowledge on which we necessarily distrust our own private decision, until it is confirmed by the consent of other minds around us. Would any man, for example, venture to lay down a canon respecting the sublime or beautiful, merely from his own personal feeling? Is it not, on the contrary, universally acknowledged, that we can only pronounce as to the real forms of beauty, by the extent to which they appeal to the sensibilities of mankind at large? Would any one, again, venture to maintain that his own individual conception of virtue, or the highest good, is absolutely true and adequate? Is it not, on the contrary, tacitly admitted, that this is a conception which grows up more and more into brightness and reality in the common con-

sciousness of mankind? The same argument applies to the idea of the Absolute—the conception of a God. The only appeal we have for the correctness and adequacy of this idea is to the universal consciousness of man, enlightened, of course, by all the rays of light which flow from nature, from history, and from revelation, upon it.

Now, the reason why we are obliged in these cases to appeal from the individual to the common consciousness, is to be found simply and solely in the fact, that all such conceptions depend not upon the understanding, not upon any development of the logical faculty, but upon the natural and spontaneous intuitions of the human mind. These intuitions are in no respect individual: they belong to mankind as a whole; they form, as it were, a life that runs through the soul of humanity, that develops itself in the flow of the ages—a life that cannot be said to be perfect in any one human being, nor, indeed, in any individual age or country, but which only performs its destined function through the medium of the consciousness of the universal man.

We may now bring the whole problem, therefore, which has been discussed in the present Lecture, to this point: The claims of the individual reason, and of the universal reason, we find, are both valid; but the former—*i.e.*, the individual judgment—avails us for a last and final appeal only within the region of the understanding, where one truth has to be developed logically from another; the latter, or the universal judgment, must be our

guide in all cases where our knowledge depends upon intuition—*i.e.*, upon the direct perception of fundamental and essential ideas. Such is the general conclusion to which we have arrived, by the whole of the foregoing remarks.

Now, if all our knowledge were duly apportioned into these two divisions—if we could at once say, This is of a logical and this of an intuitional character—nothing would be easier than the practical application of the canon we have laid down. But, as we have before shown, science contains within it, for the most part, two elements,—the intuition and the logical construction, the matter and the form; and, consequently, the respective offices of the individual and of the universal consciousness are often blended in one result. All we can say, therefore, is, that just in proportion as a science is predominantly of a formal character, in that proportion it may be perfected by individual thinking; but the more it involves of an intuitive element, the more it must depend upon the development of the universal mind—the progress of thinking in the world. Verbal logic, for example, as a science, is entirely formal, and it sprung forth, in the person of Aristotle, almost to its full bloom; but if we take any of the higher sciences, such as music, ethics, and theology, we shall find that, in this case, advancement must necessarily depend upon the gradual unfolding of those great intuitions upon which they are entirely founded. This fact, we declare, ought never to be lost sight of. No error is more com-

mon, none more mischievous, than for men to imagine that their own intuitions are absolutely perfect, and that all the discrepancies which exist within the higher branches of truth, only result from false reasoning upon fixed and sufficient data. The fact is, that men of sound mind more commonly than not reason correctly; and the discrepancies that appear in their systems will, in the great majority of cases, be found to depend upon their starting with different conceptions or intuitions as to the primary data they respectively assume. And so it often happens, after the logical combatants have exhausted their weapons, their strength, perhaps their vocabulary of abuse, and their last relics of mutual toleration, that the mighty spirit of humanity rolls forward in its course, sweeps all their verbal trifling into oblivion, pours new light upon the very conceptions which they regarded as fixed or settled points, merges the question discussed into some higher principle, and leads us over every obstacle nearer and nearer to the centre of eternal truth. Thus, the question which the individual reason could only toss upon the billows of controversy, is wafted onwards by the ocean tide of the human reason at large into a region of brighter sunshine, and, perhaps, to the haven of satisfaction and peace.

Finally: One thing cannot but strike us here, namely, the high idea this view of the subject gives us of man as man, and the intense motives it presents to a universal and enlightened philanthropy.



Sects, systems, nations, and even individuals, have imagined themselves to be the favoured and privileged medium by which truth was to be unveiled, and the world to be illuminated and blessed. Miserable delusion! Truth is stronger and broader than this, is less partial in her favours, and more catholic in her spirit. Truth belongs not to you, my brother; nor does it belong to me. She does not shower down any especial influences, or reveal any secret penetralia peculiarly to the Briton, nor to the German, nor to the Gaul. Nay, further, she does not, for the sake of those who bow at her shrine, and call themselves *the learned*, neglect to visit those who are reputed ignorant; nor does she despise the cottage of the poor, to take up her special abode in the halls of the wealthy and the noble. Nay, so far from this, it is at our cost that we accept as perfect the conceptions of any one people, or of any one class, and overlook the rays of light which other and perhaps humbler minds reflect from the great central sun of truth's eternal day.

Already, in politics, have we learned the lesson that society is incomplete, if any one class of men is wanting, or the labour of any class set at naught. Already have we learned the lesson that there could be none rich if there were none to labour by the sweat of their brow; that there could be no unworking classes if there were no producers; that the noble, in fact, are more dependent upon the peasant and the artisan than they are upon the noble. In a word, we have learned the lesson that man

needs physically the help of his fellow-man, and that it is only by the vast division of labour that our social fabric is really maintained.

There is, however, another and a holier truth yet to be learned, namely, that it is not in his physical relations only that man needs the help of his brother, but equally so in the progress of his knowledge, the enlightenment of his mind, the development of his moral principles, the perfection of his religious nature. Individuals, parties, nations, classes, are alike insufficient of themselves; their ideas become partial, their principles one-sided, their whole inward life incomplete; they need to be balanced by other ideas, other principles, other inward perceptions and feelings; in a word, there is need of the combined influence of humanity, in its whole solid mass, to aid on the progress of truth, and usher in the reign of love.

Every estate of human life, in this point of view, becomes dignified and worthy. The poor, who are too often looked upon as merely the work-tools of society, are seen to have their part to perform in the advancement of knowledge and moral principle as well as the rest. Their necessary dependence upon their own individual resources, the healthy effect of labour upon the mind, nay, the very toils and struggles through which they often have to pass, give them certain views of great human truths which, without such experience, would have been lost and forgotten. More commonly than not, great social improvements rise from the lower to

the higher circles of society, showing us that it is in the former they are cradled, and that those who most *need* justice and benevolence to be exercised towards them, are the first to see the principles by which justice and sympathy between man and man can be legally secured. Let us but fasten this fundamental truth in our view, that the individual, the sect, the class, the nation, taken singly, is incomplete; and then at length we find a principle, under which human jealousy and animosity may die away—under which that which was regarded as a ground of hatred shall become the basis of brotherly love, and contention cease at length in the deep sense we all have of mutual obligation in the great probation and struggle of life.

Here the hope arises, that mankind may veritably become one—one in affection as they are now virtually one in social co-operation—one, not only to develop the material resources of the earth, but one to unfold the richer mines of spiritual truth. Surely it is time for individualism to cease in its spirit, as in its principle. Let but the great truth go forth, that the individual mind is incomplete, that the intuitions upon which all human progress depends, are the property not of a class, but of humanity as a whole; let it be seen that there is a living consciousness running through all the branches of the vast social system—that upon this must depend the real happiness of every individual man in society, as well as the peace and repose of the world; and then, at length, may dis-

cord and disorder abate, the sense of true brotherhood grow strong, and the great organ of the human soul, rightly attuned in all its parts, send forth divine harmonies, which shall blend in eternal concord with the diviner melodies of heaven.

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#### POSTSCRIPT TO THE SECOND LECTURE.

IN opposing the principle of private judgment, as we have done in this Lecture, it must be carefully kept in mind that there is a very broad distinction between the *right* of private judgment in matters of conscience, and the *possibility* of it in the pursuit of moral and spiritual truth. The right of private judgment, we are infinitely far from denying. If there be one truth which above any other is coming more and more clearly before the light of day, it is the personal responsibility of every man, according to his opportunities, to God, and to God alone, in all matters of conscience. But this is a totally different thing from the principle, which makes man's individual reason the supreme *test* of truth.

To have brought out fully the right of private judgment in matters of conscience, to have made our position as accountable creatures clearly depend upon the state of our own individual *will*, this is

the great glory of Protestantism, and its eternal service to the world; but unhappily the absoluteness and independence of the individual will, in matters of conscience, has been confounded with the absoluteness and independence of the individual *reason* in matters of truth. When we say that every man has the right to interpret the Word of God for himself, the proper meaning to be attached to such an expression is, that every man has the right to carry out his convictions of duty, as based upon it, so far as his present knowledge reaches. But to affirm that the individual reason is competent to produce a final theology out of the Bible by its own unaided efforts, is quite another matter.

The fact that so high a place has been assigned to the individual reason, in constructing a theology, has arisen from overlooking the nature and province of intuition. It has been generally supposed that the data of all Christian theology are given in the Bible, and that the understanding has to form its system out of them, by the ordinary process of *induction*. This principle of forming a theology, we regard as radically and totally unsound. For, first, We do not (for many reasons which cannot now be stated) hold with the *verbal* inspiration of the Scriptures—a doctrine highly necessary to the above theory; nor do we believe that single passages are to be trusted when taken away from their *organic* position in the whole body of inspired truth. Secondly, Even supposing we could rely upon individual passages, yet our theology must

mainly depend, not upon the literal induction of the words, but upon the spiritual sense we attach to them, upon the religious intuitions they may serve to express—in a word, upon the whole state of the *religious consciousness* in the interpreter. Take the simple proposition, “There is a God;” this, viewed as a matter of mere logical understanding, is an assertion which all can alike comprehend; but the real essential meaning of the proposition varies immeasurably, according to the *conception* which lies under the word “God” itself. And so it is with every Christian doctrine. Each one, as a logical proposition, may be clear enough; but yet there may be an infinite number of theologies, in the minds of men who abide by the very same terms. To construct our theology, then, by a simple process of induction from the Bible, we regard as an attempt equally impracticable and absurd.

The Bible is a book of *religion*, not of theology. It appeals to our spiritual nature—it brightens our highest intuitions, and impregnates our religious consciousness with its own peculiar Christian element. Here, then, lies the germ of all *theology*. It has to be drawn forth from the deeper and spiritual nature of man, by the action of the understanding upon the *divine elements* there infused. In this way it follows exactly the development of all other sciences, which in like manner are drawn primarily and essentially from the intuitional consciousness, by the efforts of the logical understanding. The whole relation of religion and

theology, indeed, must be reversed from the too common notion which is entertained respecting them. Instead of supposing the logical proposition to come first, and the religious life to flow from it, we must become deeply convinced, that, in the construction of theology, the inward religious life has ever been the primary basis, and that all our theology must be the casting of the material involved in this historical life of the Christian consciousness into a logical form. Accordingly, theology can never be a thing absolutely fixed; it is, or should be, always the reflection or symbol of the Christian consciousness of the age.

It is the error of making theology depend simply upon the understanding, and of overlooking the essential co-operation of intuition, which has afflicted Protestantism with unnumbered evils—evils, however, which it is yet destined to surmount. Intuition is the basis of all unity, logic the ground of all diversity. In proportion as men throw themselves upon the former, in all the relations of their outward religious life, they are attracted and bound closely to each other by a natural sympathy; in proportion as they seek merely a logical basis of intercommunion, will they ever find ground for distinctions, differences, separations. Such has been, more or less, the sad history of Protestantism from its commencement to the present day. Based too exclusively upon logical distinctions, it has ever tended to disintegration. Even unimportant differences have perpetually led to rents and schisms;

and the sad spectacle has been incessantly repeated of those who stand upon the same elevation of Christian consciousness, denouncing each other for dogmatic disagreements, which, upon their acknowledged principles, were absolutely inevitable.

It is perhaps little imagined by the stringent supporters of a high formal orthodoxy, that they are themselves maintaining the fundamental principle of all religious Rationalism. The propositions in which such orthodoxy embodies itself, are confessedly the *productions of the human understanding*, operating upon the data presented to it—nay, there is a strong infusion of the old scholastic philosophy yet in them. Now, it may be argued, If *your* individual reason is competent to affix its interpretation upon these data, *mine* is competent to do the same. If you deny this—then *on what principle* do you defend your own competency, and reject that of any other person; or what becomes of the professed right of *private* judgment? There is, in fact, no point at which we can stop, when once the individual principle is fully asserted, until we acknowledge the equal competency of every man to be as wild and extravagant, or, what is much the same thing, as rationalistic as he pleases; while to sever ourselves from him, is to do so precisely because he has carried out our own professed principle of private interpretation, which, in truth, equally justifies *his* severance from *us*.

The whole tendency of this doctrine is, in fact, to unchristianize the Church; for one of two things



must necessarily result from it. Either point after point must be given up as *essential*, in order to conserve outward unity amidst the disputes to which logical distinctions incessantly give rise; or the process of division into sects must go on till our outward religious life becomes pulverized into minutest atoms. Of each of these results we have abundant experience around us. The number of sects into which Protestant orthodoxy is divided, and is still dividing, gives us too palpable an instance of the latter; and no one probably will deny that this tendency, if allowed to go forward unchecked, can have any other than a dechristianizing influence, in loosing the bonds of religious catholicity, fraternal communion, and the organic growth of the Christian life. With regard to the former result, almost every Protestant communion has given an instance of the process by which Christian Churches, based too much on logical propositions, naturally slide down the scale through all the intermediate points, until, in logical Unitarianism, or in that entire Rationalism to which it still further tends, they find the "dissidence of dissent and the [*ultra*] Protestantism of the Protestant religion."

There is this delusion, too, attaching itself to a logical theology in its process towards naturalism, namely, that when formal propositions come to be more and more regarded as the essential elements of Christianity, the theological system is considered by its advocates to be so much the more deep and perfect in proportion as these propositions become

logically consecutive and comprehensible. The Calvinistic Nonconformist, the high Evangelical Churchman, and still more the Scottish Presbyterian, who have developed their theology into an entire and consecutive system, generally regard the theology of less formal theologians or communities as highly imperfect and superficial in comparison with their own, just because it is not so complete in its logical construction. They set up dogmatic boundaries, beyond which no one must ever transgress, and then, dragging their adversary within the circle, commence a battle of logic, imagining themselves profound, just in proportion to the ingenuity and syllogistic consistency of their *reasoning*. It is little supposed, in the meantime, that their real compass of thought may be very insignificant, nay, that it may be far transcended by the very adversary whom they imagine themselves to have demolished the moment he gets outside of their own definitions.

The same thing occurs over again with the high orthodox theologian and the logical Unitarian. It is the turn of the latter now to set up *his* boundary, which he carefully marks off with precise definitions. The battle of logic is again renewed, and of course, under these circumstances, very much in favour of the one who is nearest the confines of Rationalism; the consequence of which is, a very general conviction, on the part of Unitarians, that they stand, in power of thinking and reasoning, far before all the rest of their age, and while they

kindly tolerate, they heartily pity, the follies and superstitions of their brethren so far behind them. In like manner, however, is the Unitarian worsted in his turn, when he comes into collision with the ultra-Rationalist.

Now, in all this process, the power of intuition, that by which the deeper elements of Christian truth can alone be realized, is left out of the question. Once bring this element to bear, and we find that in nine cases out of ten, the intuitional faculty is developed *in the inverse proportion* to the logical. The man whose theology was imagined least complete has, in all probability, the fullest amount of divine idea descending all bright and living from the infinite Creator of truth. The Rationalist, who thought himself so immeasurably before the age, goes on proving everything until there is nothing left for him to prove. The full development, however, of the relation subsisting between the ethical and critical factors in theology, we must leave for a more befitting occasion.

In making these observations upon formal theology, I am not objecting to its existence; for, in the present state of mankind at least, it is indispensable. All I am anxious to do is, to point out its real constituents, and assign to the formal element its true and subordinate place. If there be one object nearer to my heart in life than another, it is that of driving the frightful inroads of Rationalism upon the inward and outward life of religion, far away from the Christian Church and the Christian

heart. It must not be imagined, however, that in doing so, the rationalistic element of what is termed orthodoxy can be allowed to escape unassailed. The rationalistic, the individual, the logical principle itself, must be uprooted before we shall be safe from its bitter fruits. Not until we stand upon the unity of our religious consciousness, and hold logical statements with a looser hand—not until we are drawn closer and closer to the centre of the catholic Christian intuitions of the pious, shall we escape the deadening influence of sectarianism; and, one heart imbuing another with its true religious life, all march onward together to that common goal of our earthly and heavenly communion, where the darkness of the understanding shall be eternally illumined by the fire of holy love.

## LECTURE III.

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### ON THE PHILOSOPHY OF TRADITION.

IN the preceding Lectures we have been engaged in criticising some of those fundamental principles upon which the certainty of our knowledge has been supposed to rest. We have entered at some length into the authority of the senses, as a source of truth, and proved that the intimations of sense viewed alone, and uninterpreted by the light of the human reason, are virtually null and void, as far as the attainment of any actual knowledge is concerned. The reason of this is evident, when we consider that the experience of the senses gives us but the fleeting impression of each succeeding moment, as it comes and goes. The knowledge which results from these impressions, it is manifest, springs from the exertion of certain *faculties*, which have their seat within the deeper recesses of the human soul.

This led us, accordingly, to investigate the authority of the individual reason, that faculty by which the bare intimations of sense are classified, generalized, and then formed into a body of experimental truth. There are many, it is well known,

who place implicit reliance upon the individual reason, as though it were the sole organ of truth to man, the last appeal we have for the certainty of our knowledge, and the foundation of all philosophy. This principle (which we have termed the principle of individualism) takes its stand upon the affirmation, that the human faculties in each man are complete—that, consequently, they are adequate for the full discovery and determination of truth, as far as truth is accessible at all to the human mind.

Against this principle, viewed as the basis of a philosophical system, we have urged various objections, which it is needless at present to repeat. All we wish now to do is, to remind you of the fundamental idea, which lies at the very ground-work of individualism, namely, *the complete and universal validity of the human faculties in each individual man*. By keeping the eye fixed upon this fundamental idea, you will be the better able to understand the re-action to which the principle of individualism has given rise. Philosophical systems, be it remembered, are little more than so many histories of the actions and re-actions of great ideas and principles; such oppositions appear to be the necessary conditions of progress, and, consequently, instead of being scandalized by extreme opinions in any direction, it is always well to see what truth they really contain, and what lessons of wisdom they are likely to supply.

Now, if we regard the principle of individualism

already pointed out (the principle, namely, that all truth comes from within, that it is all drawn forth from the interior economy of the human mind) as one extreme, then the opposite extreme will manifestly tend to the supposition, that no truth whatever comes from within—that no elements of human knowledge are derived from the constitution of the mind itself, but that all we are entitled to denominate truth at all is brought over and infused into us from some objective source. The question, therefore, naturally arises, If the senses prove utterly incompetent to lead us into the higher regions of human knowledge; if, moreover, upon the closest investigation and the most patient trial, the individual reason (except, indeed, in mere formal science) proves untrustworthy; if, in a word, we must renounce the hope of finding truth for ourselves by any subjective processes whatever, then, what *objective* source is there to which we can look, and from whence can we supply at once our longing and our necessities as intelligent beings? It is then, as an answer to this question, that the principle of tradition or authority has been propounded as a philosophical method. The human reason, it is urged, is weak and fallible, but the divine reason is perfect and infallible. God himself has deigned to send forth truth *formally stated* into the world, and to put it into human minds, as its choice repository. This truth, thus imparted, has come down traditionally from age to age through certain appointed media; and the means, the sole

means, by which we can derive complete certainty, respecting any branch of truth whatever, is to place ourselves in connection with these channels of divine ideas, and receive, in this way, by tradition and upon authority, what we must ever have failed to gain in any way for ourselves.

Now, the principle of tradition, as a philosophical method, needs to be very carefully investigated. Every philosophical method, whatever it be, owes its power over the human mind to some true and reasonable idea, which it grasps and appropriates. It is so unquestionably with the principle of tradition. That there is such a thing as tradition, that there are truths floating through the universal mind of humanity, which come down to us distinctly from an objective and celestial origin, may be true enough; but this is far from involving the correctness of tradition, as a philosophical method—far from proving that *all human certitude* rests upon this as its sole foundation.

What we have to do now, therefore, is by no means to inquire, whether there may be, or whether there may not be, such a thing as a divine tradition in the world; it is neither our business here to affirm nor to deny such a fact; all we have to do is simply to probe the principle of tradition, viewed as a scientific organum—to see if it can be put forward as the ultimate test of human certitude—to inquire whether there really be no way whatever to arrive at any real and substantial knowledge on the higher questions of human interest, except through



such an objective channel. And I may be permitted to say, in passing, that I shall sedulously avoid mootng the question in such a manner that it may be considered to bear directly upon, or to interfere with, any man's theological profession. Every word I shall utter will, as far as I am aware, be consistent with any form of theological opinion, whether it be of a Catholic or a Protestant character. It must be evident, however, to every reflecting mind, that as the abettors of tradition have chosen to make a philosophical principle out of it; as they have attempted to shut us up to this one plan of attaining certitude in all our knowledge; and as they have taken their stand mainly upon the theological aspect of the question, it is impossible for us to meet their arguments without fighting somewhat upon the same platform. This must be my apology for touching so largely, as we shall be obliged to do to-night, upon the ground of theology. I hope to do so, however, I repeat, simply in its philosophical relations, without trenching upon the sphere of any man's conscientious religious opinions. All I can say is simply this, that if it be the principle of any community to reject the power of the human reason altogether, and to deny it the capacity of ever attaining any kind of certitude, then, in the name of philosophy itself, as whose advocate I profess to stand forth to-night, nay, in the name of common sense and of humanity, we must come into collision with a system which would extinguish all human thinking, properly so called, and reduce

mankind to a mere passive receptacle of ideas, outwardly and mechanically imparted. Without making, therefore, any further preliminary remarks, we shall proceed at once to expound and to examine the philosophy of tradition.

Let me begin, then, by pointing out to you this unquestionable fact in the natural history of the human mind, namely, that man has, for the most part, an innate tendency to repose confidence in authority. Authority, however, as here used, is merely another name for tradition, both alike implying the immediate reception of certain thoughts upon the bare assertion of another. To understand, therefore, the natural history of tradition, we must notice the different modes in which this innate confidence in authority is exhibited, and examine the different stages through which it passes from its lower to its higher or more general forms.

I. First of all, in order to view the matter in its germ, picture to yourselves a human mind, in the earlier stages of its development—I mean the mind of a child, under the guidance and control of its parent. Here we see the principle of tradition in its most simple, most natural, most necessary form. Many of you can probably recall the full, confiding, all-reposing trust, with which, in early life, you received the dictates of parental wisdom. All of you, at any rate, may easily observe it by a little close attention to the daily phenomena of infant life. The mind of a child seems to be formed expressly for an implicit belief in authority.

All around it is wonderful, deep, mysterious. The world of nature without, with its endless diversity, the phenomena of its own being as related to external things, the busy activities of men, the productions of art, the almost supernatural results of science—all burst in upon the young mind with a magical influence. Utterly incapable of comprehending these things for himself, the child throws himself upon the wisdom of the parent: what *he* says is accepted as infallible; and thus the principle of authority supplies the place of a greater intellectual maturity.

Now, let us look for a moment at the nature of tradition as here exhibited; and let us consider how far the knowledge which is received by it is valid and trust-worthy. It will, I suppose, be generally admitted, that, *relatively to the child itself*, the authority of the parent is highly trust-worthy and infinitely important. What I mean by saying relatively to the child, is this, that in all ordinary cases, it is far more probable that the instructions of the parent should come nearer to the truth than the crude imaginations of untaught and undeveloped childhood.

The mind of a child, left to itself, we know, runs off into the most extraordinary theories upon almost every topic it contemplates. If the fancy be vivid, and the inventive genius fruitful, there is no end to the perpetual flow of conceptions and ideas which present themselves, as sober and earnest reality, to the intellect. On the other hand, the parent has

been, at least for some time, in the school of ~~exper~~ience: the roseate hue of childhood has worn away; the world has begun to be viewed in its sober reality; the difference between fact and fiction to him has become evident. Hence the report of the parent, relatively to the child, must be extremely valuable; it can at least correct errors, disperse wild imaginings, and instil some of the simplest conceptions of experimental truth. Accordingly, if we may regard that as an outward source of truth, which transcends the power of our own minds, then, we must admit, that *to the child*, the parental tradition is a source of truth, which, in comparison with its own ideas, is highly trustworthy and unquestionably valuable. On the contrary, if you abstract the dictates of parental authority from the circumstances in which it is ordinarily exercised and required—if you look at it as a principle of knowledge, not relatively to the child, but relatively to the fulness and brightness of truth itself—then, all such tradition will at once appear to be utterly unsatisfactory and unsound as a final ground of human certitude. The principles of knowledge, instilled by the parent into the child, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, are simply the reflection of the ordinary belief of the age, the country, or the community in which they both happen to be placed. Whatever errors attach themselves to popular opinions—nay, whatever individual absurdities may, in particular cases, be added to them, all this very easily can, all this does mingle

up perpetually with parental instruction. Relatively to the truth itself, therefore, tradition, as handed down from sire to son, is a source of knowledge upon which very little reliance, in the abstract, is to be placed; and yet, relatively to the child, it is highly valuable. All we can say of it is this, that popular opinion, however erroneous, is more likely to contain a large element of truth in it than the first speculations of infancy: accordingly, the child is right, nay, in a certain sense, is bound, by its very constitution and circumstances, to trust it; bound to do so for this reason, that being as yet incapable of developing truth for itself, having none of those avenues open which in after years are easily accessible, it naturally and necessarily resigns itself to the one only source that lies fully within its reach.

I have dwelt somewhat particularly upon this very simple and obvious case of authority, because we shall see in it a kind of type of *all tradition*, of whatever character it may be. In the case of the child, standing in its natural relation to the parent, we have distinctly seen this property attaching to the principle of authority, viz., that it is highly valuable, not, indeed, as being a solid principle of knowledge in itself, but as being the best substitute that is open to an undeveloped and infantile mind. It is of great importance to maintain this very obvious distinction—a distinction which has too often been utterly lost sight of and confounded.

The maintainers of tradition, as the sole basis of

human certitude, seeing the incalculable value of parental or any such immediate authority to the child, have forgotten that it is of value *only to the child*. Seizing upon its relative character, they have made its worth, as a principle of knowledge, to appear absolute; and clothed the truth thus flowing traditionally from sire to son, with a kind of divine infallibility, as though it were not a natural arrangement, but a special institution of God for the purpose, and therefore would be supernaturally preserved from error and corruption.

I will quote to you a single passage to the point, from a work on Ethics, written by an Oxford Professor. Addressing himself to the young, he says—

“ Let me give you these few maxims:

“ 1. In all things, act by testimony—[i.e., never on your own judgment.]

“ 2. In all things, take that testimony which is appointed for you by God, which is given to you by persons set over you by his hand.

“ 3. Never depart from this, unless you have the clearest and most indisputable dispensation conveyed to you by an authority, also set over you by God, but appointed as superior to them.

“ Or, in still fewer words—

“ Believe in and obey your parents. Believe in and obey your king; and never dispute their voice, except you are commanded by—whom?” By the clergyman of the parish!

This occurs, remember, in a book devoted to philosophy, not to theology; yet such is the manner in

which the idea of parental tradition, even philosophically viewed, has been twisted from its natural use into a special divine institution—a proceeding which were harmless enough in itself, unless it were so easily made the basis of crushing the human mind while yet tender, under the intolerable weight of spiritual despotism.

So far, then, we have discussed what we may term tradition of the first degree—the tradition, namely, which bases itself upon the natural authority of the parent in relation to the intellect of the child.

II. We now come to consider what we may term tradition of the second degree, and that is documentary authority. The child, as he grows up to years of maturity, gets beyond the bare influence of his first instructor. The primary idea of childhood respecting parental authority is, that knowledge exists in the parent absolutely, and to an indefinite degree: after a time, however, he observes that the parent himself appeals to a higher and a superior authority beyond him. Instead of drawing all the knowledge he imparts from himself, as a native well-spring and divine repository of truth, he refers the mind of the young inquirer to documents, to books, to records of various kinds, as the ground upon which his own knowledge rests. Parental instruction, accordingly, is soon felt to be underlaid by documentary instruction; and when the pupil arrives at a period of life in which these books and documents become intelligible to him, there is

no good reason why he should not *gradually* transfer his blind trust in the parent to an appeal to those very records on which the parent's authority itself is confessedly based.

Let us take a simple and ordinary example for illustration. We will suppose that the opening mind of a pupil, such as I have described, is intensely interested in the great questions which come under the cognizance of the metaphysical and moral sciences. Here, he wants to understand the nature of the human faculties, the grounds of free agency, the origin of conscience, the essence of virtue, and so forth. To supply the defect of parental authority on these points, he can come to the moral and philosophical literature of the past and of the present. As he searches into this, however, books in fearful multitude beset his way; opinions the most varied claim his attention; systems the most opposite, and yet perhaps the most plausible, assail his judgment. Alas! the mental independence he has asserted for himself is no sinecure. While he sailed forward upon the calm surface of authority—while he just received the notions spontaneously offered to him—all was smooth and pleasing; now, on the other hand, what struggles, what toils, what doubts, what fears, are to be encountered on the way! Manly and noble it may be to let slip the cable which held him fast to the firm land of tradition, and to launch forth upon a voyage of new discovery; but, alas! the ocean of human speculation is a troublous one; and it needs a firm



eye and a strong arm to steer our course safely along such agitated waters, to the region of truth and of mental repose. Books and documents may be vastly useful to him *as data*, but they cannot constitute a *final criterion* of truth: that must be found elsewhere.

Let us now make another supposition: let us suppose that this same youthful lover of wisdom, this same earnest inquirer, has his inmost spirit touched with a deep longing to know the mysteries of his own nature—to understand the Being from whom he came—to comprehend his duties, his hopes, his destiny hereafter. On all these points he has been duly instructed by parental authority; but the parent has uniformly appealed here also, as before, to documentary evidence, and he has pointed, not merely to the writings of great and good men, not merely to the religious literature of past ages; but he has pointed, first and foremost, to the supreme authority of those documents which contain the primary basis of the Christian faith. Here, then, it might be said, here we surely have a final appeal: for we have not to judge, in this case, between the clashing opinions of men, but to receive a divine testimony, sent to us immediately from heaven. Now, let us look a little closely into this point; and, with the renewed assurance that I shall not touch upon any man's religious scruples, let me simply appeal to your plain common sense, in order to see if we can find here in these documents a final ground of certitude, not

upon Christian doctrine, for with it I have nothing to do, but upon the philosophy of human nature.

Now, it must be obvious to every reflecting mind, that it is one thing to go to the Sacred Records, admitting them to be even verbally inspired, for positive historical facts, such as those connected with the founding of Christianity, and quite another thing to go there for philosophical principles; one thing to find there moral and religious satisfaction, and another thing to seek a whole system of logical truth—first, upon natural theology, and then upon human nature and destiny. We may admit, that these records give us data to any amount you please; but they do not give us a digested theory of the moral universe: we may admit, that they furnish the facts in which all human reformation is founded; but that does not constitute them a final decision, upon the accuracy of our whole system of truth, *as a system*; for, were that the case, theology, as a science, would be altogether superfluous.

Let us return to the case we have supposed; let us imagine that young inquiring mind, having now got beyond the reach and depth of parental teaching; let us suppose him to be burning with intense desire to know the great First Cause of all things aright; to interpret the phenomena of human nature, of human freedom, and of human suffering; to dive into the mysteries of human destination; to grasp the conditions under which it can be fulfilled; to have his *understanding* fully satisfied on all these points. If he has really bid adieu to his tradition-

ary belief, and if he really comes as an inquirer *de novo*; then assuredly he finds the passage onwards to the haven of clear reflective truth to be one of amazing difficulty. Shall he appeal to professed theologians to help him? Alas! theological systems at once start up in still more fearful array than philosophical systems had done before; he knows that *there is* a deep and an awful truth after which he is striving, but where is it? which system is the right one? On what principle can he mediate between the claims of so many great, earnest, devout minds, whose systematic views so vastly differ? Shall he, then, on the other hand, throw all human systems aside, and appeal only to the documents to which they appeal, namely, to those which, by the universal consent of the Christian world, are denominated the Word of God? Suppose him to do so, yet these divine documents, we repeat, do not offer a logical system of philosophical truth all ready adapted to the understanding. In order to get one from them, they must be interpreted; and to interpret them, the most enlarged aids and appliances are absolutely necessary. To gain such a complete, connected, logical system of truth from them, altogether irrespective of human tradition, is an undertaking tremendously arduous, not to say *impossible*; and even if this were accomplished, there is the distinct historical fact before our face, that minds the most acute, the most honest, the most devout, have done so before us, have used the data with all integrity, and have ended in the con-

struction of very different philosophical theories, appealing to the understanding, although, it is true, they have all evinced a certain moral and religious unity, as regards man's higher or spiritual nature.

Moreover, history shows us that the work of interpreting data, and the method of systematizing our natural and dogmatic theology into a logical whole, has varied greatly according to the character of the age, during different periods of the Christian era. Every age brings its own peculiar views, feelings, and moral developments to the task. And the inquirer very naturally asks, Why should I not do the same? Viewing all these documents, whether divine or human, as data, upon which my own individual system of philosophic truth is to be founded, can it be otherwise than that I should bring the thoughts, ideas, conceptions, intuitions, which I have derived from my education, my country, my age, my whole mental and moral construction, to the task of interpreting these data aright, and erecting the system upon them? Evidently, this must be the case. The supposition, which I believe many entertain, that their own interpretation of the data presented is absolutely, positively, and unalterably correct—that their whole theory of the universe, as an intellectual theory, must be unexceptionably perfect—can only be the exhalation of an ignorance and a narrowness of mind, with which it is not worth while either to argue or dispute.

Let us sum up, accordingly, the result of these

reflections in a few brief sentences. We see, that the written documents to which we rightly appeal, as a valid *source* of knowledge, on the higher questions of human interest, cannot possibly serve as an ultimate *test* for a complete system of philosophical truth. We may readily enough admit their inestimable moral value; we may regard them as the surest basis of all human reformation; we may see in them the appointed means by which the creature is to be brought into moral harmony with the Creator; we may recognise them as the Word of God. All this may be fully admitted, but yet it is abundantly evident, that they were never *intended* to give us a whole philosophy, to take the place of all the efforts of human reason, to spare us all the toil and struggle of patient searching for knowledge; that they were intended, on the other hand, to give us rather impulses for thinking, and feeling, and acting aright, and not by any means to place a perfect system of logical thinking into our hands; for, had this been the case, there could have been no further diversity of opinion. The very fact, however, that unnumbered philosophical theories have emanated from the bosom of the universal Church; the very fact that every succeeding age, as it rolls new discoveries to the light, clears our intellectual horizon more and more before us—all this shows us, that while there is a fixedness in moral excellence that never varies, yet the human intellect is ever pressing forward in its course, to grasp, in their fuller and deeper intensity, the great problems

of man, of the universe, and of God. Documentary evidence, then, we say, cannot, in the very nature of things, be to us a final test for the validity of a system; in other words, it can never serve as a fixed and a final principle of philosophical truth. Documents embody only dead letters, not living thoughts; they are the symbols of truth, not truth itself; and the question ever recurs, How is the letter to be interpreted? What are the living thoughts, to which it answers, and of which it was intended to be the symbol? By whom, I ask, is this question to be settled? How is the interpretation to be fixed? Is it not clear as light, that we want another authority to interpret this authority; that we want a vital one to interpret the dead; that we want a mind or a spirit to pour its radiance over the letter; that we want some appeal, not to a fixed symbol, but to a living intelligence? This is, in fact, recognised, in some form or other, by all classes of Christian men. It is recognised by the Catholic, for he appeals to the authority of the Church or to its temporal head. It is recognised equally by the Protestant, who solves the question by affirming the principle of private interpretation, by the human reason, aided by a special and a divine instructor. By all it is felt, that the mere letter of any documentary evidence we may possess needs some other, and that some living principle, as a final appeal, to decide upon its full significancy.

We have thus represented tradition in its first and in its second degrees—the authority of the

parent representing the one, the authority of documents representing the other. The first, we showed was valuable relatively to the child, but not as a real principle of truth. The second, we have now shown, may be valuable too as data, nay, when we come to divine documents infinitely valuable, also, as moral agencies, but yet cannot serve as an ultimate *philosophical* principle. We need, in this case, some authority to fix the meaning of the written authority. It is not for me now to discuss the theological opinions respecting the mode in which this deficiency is supplied—whether it be by a divine or by a human instructor: this would be going out of the region of philosophy into that of dogmatic theology. My present duty is now to follow up the principle of tradition in its course; and having pointed out its defects, as a philosophical method, in its earlier stages of development, to see whether it can lay greater claim to validity in any of its more matured and developed forms.

We have seen, then, that documentary tradition cannot serve as a philosophical basis; because, admitting it to be a final test, viewed as a moral agency, yet, viewed as a philosophical system, it would require another authority to interpret it. Now, the question comes, Is there such an authority? Is there any living tradition which can fully interpret the documentary tradition, and which will serve as a solid basis on which we can rest the whole certainty of our higher knowledge? Those who adhere to the principle of tradition as the

sheet-anchor of their whole system of philosophical belief, affirm that *there is* such a living authority in the world; that it exists in bodies of men who are combined for the very purpose of maintaining it; and that our whole hope of intellectual security and repose is based upon it. This, then, leads us to what we may term tradition of the third degree—that, namely, which resides in communities.

III. The authority that is to interpret aright the documentary data, and by which we are to solve the higher question of speculative interest, is supposed by many to be the common consent of a number of minds, through a series of years, in one particular view, or in one particular set of opinions respecting human nature and destiny. It is well known, as a plain historical fact, that there are various communities, more or less numerous in different countries, who have adopted each some particular mode of interpreting the phenomena which God has given us in nature and revelation; and, moreover, that these communities oftentimes retain their theory of truth materially unchanged through a long succession of years, or even of ages. Of such a nature, for example, are the Roman Catholic body, the Greek Church, and several branches of the Protestant world.

Now, it is not my business at present to determine how much of real knowledge there may be in such traditions; it is not my duty either to weigh the relative value of them as existing in different



countries and different communities; still less am I at all disposed to deny that there is a vast amount of actual truth thus floating throughout the world on the most important topics which can possibly engage any creature's attention. Nay, so far from that, I know not what else the great mass of mankind can do, who have to live by the sweat of their brow, and cannot, in the nature of things, have access to all the sources of knowledge, than attach themselves to the system of truth that is maintained in some one or other of these spiritual communities, however little satisfactory (as we imagine) *some* of them may be. The question we have now to ask, is not, Whether these floating traditions are valuable or not, as serving an important end to the interests of mankind?—that is quite another question—but, *Whether any of them can be rationally assumed, as a philosophical principle, to whose final decision we may safely appeal?* A little consideration of the matter, I apprehend, shows us that the tradition of communities is very much the same thing, only on a larger scale, as parental authority. Parental authority, we showed, is valuable as a principle of knowledge to the child—valuable, that is, as supplying the immediate wants of the immature and inexperienced mind. As a real and philosophical test of truth, however, it is comparatively worthless. Exactly so is it, on a larger scale, with the authority of individual communities, viewed as exponents of the data given to us in nature and in documents. That the traditionary knowledge which

they, as it were, hold in solution, is, upon the whole, highly valuable to the world, I do not believe it is possible, upon any rational principles, to deny. For what is their effect? A multitude of minds are sent forth hourly upon the awful passage of life, which otherwise must necessarily have been driven about, athwart their whole course, by the most fearfully-conflicting conceptions.

Incapable, for the most part, of thinking steadily, and of weighing evidence—often incapable even of reading any documents at all—their minds must have been one intellectual chaos. But here some consecutive and logical system is presented to them; they accept it traditionally as valid; they embrace it entire, more commonly than not, from the want of knowing anything else there is to embrace, and are, in thousands of instances, calmly led, by the truth thus embodied and inculcated, at once to their duty and their destiny. As the instruction of the parent is a substitute for mental maturity in the child, so is the tradition we are considering a substitute to multitudes, and an invaluable one, for the fuller opportunities of mental enlightenment. That such authority as this, however, cannot be to any one, who wants to inquire philosophically into the grounds of truth, a fixed and absolute principle of knowledge, is a direct induction from the fact, that the views and theories it presents in different communities are infinitely varied. Were it asserted that the tradition of some one community is absolutely valid, as being a pure reflection of the Divine Mind

as given in the sacred records, we should immediately require another authority, an *imperium in imperio*, to decide *which*, out of all these traditional theories, is the real one—a decision which, I imagine, it would be long ere we could succeed in gaining, as all would be too eager to claim it for themselves. We decide, then, that authority as exercised by communities of men, like that of the father in his family, may serve a useful moral purpose, but can never become a valid philosophical appeal.

There is just one plea by which this conclusion can be contravened—one, too, which has been often urged by the advocates of traditionalism—namely, this, that if we strip away disputed points, if we abstract from the whole phenomena of the mind of Christendom those questions which have been the battle-field of controversy, we may still find a residuum of catholic truth, which has been universally handed down along the stream of time, from the first awakening of the Christian consciousness to the present moment.

Now, there can be no doubt but that, in proportion as large masses of minds, placed, moreover, under different circumstances, and educated under varying influences, have agreed, as by common consent, in the maintenance of any particular sentiments, in that proportion there is a prestige of veracity in their favour; but, to make this common, or, as it is often termed, catholic tradition, a fundamental principle of human knowledge, and a final appeal for its validity, is a procedure which will by

no means stand the test of a close examination. To prove this, we offer the following reasons:—

1. Amidst the mass of floating tradition, upon the great questions of man's nature, duty, and destiny, respecting God and the universe, and respecting all the higher objects of human interest, who is to decide what part of it is really *catholic* tradition, and what is partial, and, consequently, on this principle, untrustworthy? Here, it will be found, we must do one of two things—either we must throw ourselves upon the decision of the individual reason to settle this point, and then the final appeal is to this said reason and not to tradition at all; or we must look for *some other authority* to decide the matter for us. And, surely, the problem itself is one of no ordinary difficulty, to decide amidst the mass of human opinion, what is truly genuine and universal. What searchings of antiquity, what examination of theories, what balancing of evidences, what infinite shades of distinction, must all be gone through, before a clear, intelligible, logical system of truth could be brought forward as the quintessence of the tradition running through the civilized world, as the abstract result of the whole Christian consciousness! To settle this, I repeat, we must fall back upon an authority beneath this very authority itself; we must fall back, namely, either upon the authority of our own individual reason, or else upon some kind of outward objective infallibility. Again—

2. Even supposing we were to succeed in educ-

ing a whole body of truth, a whole theory, respecting man, the universe, and the Creator, from the mass of tradition we have before referred to: what, I ask, would be, in this case, the ground of certainty—in other words, what would be the precise reason for which we should fully yield to it our firm belief? The ground of certainty would evidently lie in the number of minds which had yielded to this system their common assent; not in the mere fact of its being a tradition, for a great deal of tradition is false. It is the assent of these minds that makes the particular opinions we are supposing so veracious; it is the assent of these minds which singles them out from all others as absolutely universal and true; it is the assent of these minds, in a word, which gives them the very property of being regarded as of divine authority. Accordingly, the ground of certitude, after all, even on the principle of a traditionary catholicity, lies, not in the tradition as tradition, but in the spirit of humanity, which alone decides upon its genuine character, and separates the true from the false. Here, then, the very principle of traditionalism virtually breaks down; the ground of belief, instead of being purely objective, becomes really subjective; instead of lying beyond humanity, it is actually vested in the very soul and consciousness of humanity. The tradition may give the material of truth, but it is the consent of the universal human mind alone—it is the sympathy which it has with truth itself—it is the affinity it feels for what is valid in opposition

to what is hollow and false—it is this, I say, and this alone, which, in the case before us, gives us the ultimate appeal, and furnishes the lowest and firmest basis of certitude. It is little imagined by those who are elevating the principle “*quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*,” as the basis of all moral and religious truth, that this very principle, instead of maintaining the validity of tradition, as a final test of knowledge, is virtually speaking a direct appeal to the authority of the universal human reason, and derives from this very authority which they essay to despise all its point and all its power.

3. But again: supposing even this objection to be got over, supposing it to be clearly made out, that the theory which we derive from the universal tradition of Christendom is purely objective in its nature, and that its whole evidence rests upon its traditionary character, what must we do in this case in order to establish its complete validity? Clearly enough, if we do not admit *the mere fact of catholicity* to be an evidence of its truth, it will be necessary to prove the complete authenticity of the theory in question as an infallible living comment upon the documents which contain the basis of our Christian faith. Now, how can this be made out? Observe, we have to reject all the evidence derived from the fact of multitudes having accepted it as true, for that evidence is subjective; we have to lay aside all considerations of authority as attached to universal consent, for such would still make the final appeal to reside in humanity; we

have, on the contrary, to prove upon pure historical grounds, that simply this theory and no other was the primitive tradition of those who lived amidst the scenes of the first century of our Christian era—to prove it independently of what any number of minds may subsequently have thought or felt about it—and to demonstrate, in addition, that this early tradition was entirely a divine one. Now, if any one will maintain that he can make out a clear case of universal tradition, the certainty of which rests not at all upon common consent but upon stern historical evidence, abstracted from all human opinion; if any one will maintain that he can do this so manifestly as to make it valid as a fundamental basis of philosophical truth to man, we can only reply, that he will perform a task which no reasonable man has ever yet pretended to accomplish, and which we will venture to pronounce the least plausible of all the principles of human certitude which were ever propounded.

4. And then, even were we, after all, to trace this catholic tradition upon purely historical grounds to the opening of the Christian era, and were we then to ground the fundamental certitude of our moral and intellectual ideas upon it as its final resting-place; yet still the moment we begin to think over the matter with any careful consideration, we should be startled with the fact, that men were in possession of such ideas long before this period; that long before this tradition arose, Pythagoras, Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and others

in the eastern and western worlds, had gazed upon many sublime principles of truth, I mean philosophical truth, and that the Hebrew world had embodied in its national worship some of the very highest thoughts respecting the human and the divine nature. Supposing, then, the basis of all metaphysical and moral truth to lie in the primitive Christian tradition, how are we to account for the philosophy and the ethics which preceded it? Had these no foundation at all? or, on what principle are we to account for them?

This brings us to the last, the crowning theory of traditionalism, namely, that all human knowledge, in ancient as well as in modern times, has flowed down from a primitive revelation, which has been perpetuated from age to age, and occasionally renewed, to the present time. This is, in fact, the last resource of the traditional principle. Followed up by its opponents from one position to another, dislodged from every succeeding fortress in which it had taken its abode, here at length it finds its broadest, its boldest, its most philosophic basis. Accordingly, all the chief abettors of the traditional principle, all at least who have come to the consideration of the subject with any degree of logical power, have universally taken their stand upon this theory as being the most firm and impregnable. It was on this principle, that Henry More, that most sublime and learned of the English Platonists, based his system of all-absorbing mysticism, and it was on this principle that Theophilus Gale, the



author of the Court of the Gentiles, sought to account for all the learning and all the real philosophy of the Heathen, as well as of the Christian world.

To see this system of traditionalism, however, fully carried out with all the aids and appliances of the nineteenth century, we must look to the catholic ultramontane philosophy of France. Thirty years ago, the Count Joseph de Maistre, with the rough power of his vivid but gloomy imagination, launched his shafts against all philosophy of an independent character, and even attacked, in the person of Lord Bacon, the very foundations of the inductive system. To such an extent was the system carried, that to him *everything whatever* lying without the precincts of a divine tradition, was necessarily encompassed with error, presumption—absurdity. Perhaps, the most complete interpretation, however, which the principle of traditionalism has received, is that of the Vicomte de Bonald. This writer having set himself the task of subverting all the other philosophical principles which were claiming the attention of the age, having taken immense pains to prove the fallibility and weakness of the human reason as an instrument of knowledge, fixes us down to the following theory, as a last resource against universal scepticism and delusion: That man at his creation was furnished by God with the gift of language, and that in the words thus imparted to him, there was involved the primary germs of all the truth which he has been since only developing in the world. All knowledge,

accordingly, is an objective verbal revelation, and the wisdom of true philosophy is to relinquish its abortive attempts to evolve truth from the interior of the soul, or from the data of the human consciousness, and to search into the fragments of tradition, which we can gain from studying the meaning of words, the purport of historical documents, and all the different records in which the divine will is supposed to be embodied. This theory, moreover, leads to the notion, that this primitive tradition must have some divinely appointed channels through which, and through which alone, it is to flow over and fertilize the world. Hence we come to the ultramontane assertion, that the Church visible is the sole appointed means for this purpose, that within its circumference all is light, even as regards science universally; without its pale, all is darkness and delusion. Such is an average statement of the principle of tradition, in its most modern, most approved, and most philosophical form—the form to which that principle invariably tends as its final hypothesis.

And before we proceed to the close examination of it, we may venture just one remark, namely, that the depreciation of the human faculties, with which these philosophers invariably set out, has a sadly suicidal air about it. They take the utmost pains, first of all, to impress upon our minds that the human understanding is a weak, wavering, and utterly untrustworthy organ of knowledge; and having made this point good, they forthwith proceed

to employ it most diligently and ingeniously in the construction of their system. They investigate, they argue, they wind their way most skilfully through remote ages; they balance data, they draw conclusions, and they summon most affirmatively our belief in the whole process, our confidence in the whole result. But how is this process carried on, and by what instrument are these broad conclusions drawn? Why, certainly, by the understanding, by the human reason, by the very organ that we were schooled in the outset to look upon with suspicion and distrust. If this organ be really so weak and fallible, then there is good reason to suspect that it may have played off its tricks upon these very philosophers themselves, as well as upon the rest of the world. At any rate, unless they can show themselves to be favoured by some especial exemption from human infirmity, they cannot reasonably wonder or complain, if we apply the principle they have taught us to themselves, and take occasion of doubting the conclusions of the human understanding, as employed in their own reasonings, since it is, by their own confession, an organ by no means to be trusted with impunity.

Let us look somewhat more closely, however, at the theory itself. The theory, as we have just seen, affirms that none of our certain knowledge, upon any of the great questions of moral and philosophic truth, comes from the nature and constitution of the human faculties; but, that it is to be gained solely as a direct communication from an

outward source. Now, the great point of discussion here is, whether the deepest and most primitive ground of certitude to man is of a subjective or of an objective character; whether our final appeal be to our own internal susceptibility for the perception and appreciation of truth, or to a direct infusion of facts and ideas, by an immediate, distinct, primitive, and verbal revelation.

Should the latter or traditional hypothesis be affirmed, then there lie against it the following most fatal objections:—

1st, Admitting, for argument's sake, that, at his creation, man was really furnished with a primitive verbal revelation, it is abundantly evident that the value of this, as a source of truth, must ere long have become destroyed by the nature of the channel through which it flowed. According to these traditionists, the human faculties are not only powerless, they are perverted; the efforts they make to grasp the truth only give rise to distorted and fantastic imaginations, while the moral nature is so entirely withdrawn from all sympathy with it, that there is every predisposition to view it in the most erroneous positions. This, then, is the channel through which the supposed primitive revelation is to flow: age after age glides away, sentiment after sentiment, opinion after opinion, theory after theory, rises and falls; philosophy succeeds to philosophy, religion to religion; and then, after some centuries—yea, some millenniums of this process—we are to discover truth, all the truth we can possibly know,

all the truth of which we can have any moral certainty, in the fragments of these primary traditions! There is nothing, assuredly, very consolatory in such a theory. Experience tells us that, if any system of opinions, yea, if any isolated ideas, are originated and launched upon the ever-rolling ocean of the public mind, it requires no very lengthened period to cause that system or those ideas to pass through unnumbered phases, until often their first identity would hardly be recognised—nay, scarcely a family-likeness remain. And if this is the case now, in an enlightened age—an age, moreover, when writing and printing are so wonderfully adapted to preserve, and, as it were, to stereotype the different forms of moral truth which appear from time to time upon the surface of society—what must have been the fact in times when ideas were only held in the fleeting traces of memory, and communicated only by oral utterances—at a time, moreover, when the want of mental culture could easily admit the action of all disturbing influences to modify the conceptions of the untutored mind? Assuredly, therefore, if we are to throw ourselves upon the fragments of tradition which exist in the world, whether those which have come down from the primitive revelation, or which have been renewed at long intervals in the history of mankind, we must have a very slender chance of attaining any great degree of certainty, when only we consider the mere channel through which the truths we may educe must have flowed.

However objective the primary communications may have originally been, yet, when grasped by the human mind, they must have become subjective, or rather, if you will pardon the term, subjectivised; and thus each mind would communicate them to the succeeding age with all its own subjective peculiarities commingled with the utterance. Present a truth to ten different minds, in a clear verbal statement, and, after a year has elapsed, let those minds communicate it to ten more, and you would soon find how the subjective tendencies of each mind had impressed itself upon the whole manner in which the truth itself was grasped and transmitted. Such facts as these, then, we say, disturb the whole working of the traditionary theory, and render the continued validity and purity of truth, even supposing it to have been communicated, only possible by a constant succession of miracles.

2d, But, again, secondly, it is admitted by all, even by the most strenuous abettors of the traditionary principle, that an immense mass of error and absurdity is really transmitted down upon the stream of human tradition, as well as the actual elements of truth. Now, what we here affirm is this, that any imaginable test, by which the true can be separated from the false, implies a subjective principle of certitude within the human reason itself. The idea of our accepting the whole mass of human tradition would, of course, involve us in the most wild and meaningless absurdities. Such, then, being the case, what method must be taken

in order to separate the real from the unreal? We answer, The separation must be made either by the individual reason or by common consent. Supposing, first, we apply our own faculties to the task, and admit the facts or opinions handed down to us to be true, according as they appeal to our reason, our judgment, our moral nature, or any other part of our constitution; in this case, it is evident that we bring the matter of this traditionary lore to a subjective standard within ourselves. We do not accept the ideas presented to us because they are traditionary, since, then, we must accept all alike, but because they satisfy the requisition of our own understanding

The light of day flows to us from the sun; but what were the use of it unless the eye were adapted to receive the rays, to refract them to a focus, and thus to form images of outward realities? In this case, though the light is necessary, yet the eye is the instrument of certitude; if the eye, as an instrument of vision, be distorted, the objects will be so likewise, notwithstanding all the purity of the light which flows in upon it. We may say, therefore, that the eye is the standard of visible reality; it is the only appeal we have for the actual appearance of external things. So is it with the eye of the soul. The light of truth may flow in upon the mind, but how do we know that the inward images and ideas it presents are valid; and how can we separate them from vain illusions? Evidently, we must appeal to the

accuracy and excellence of the inward eye—of the faculties themselves: *they* must contain a standard, to which we bring all the floating traditions of mankind, and by which we must decide upon their validity. Only let this inward standard be marred, and what is there within us to which any moral or intellectual teaching can appeal? “The light of the body is the eye; if thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light; but if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, *the light that is in thee* be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

But again, supposing it is found, that our individual faculties in some cases are incapable of deciding upon the reality of our traditionary ideas—that they will not serve as a test—that they contain no standard to which we can appeal; then the next resource we have is the consent of mankind at large. Incapable of deciding for ourselves, we must consider what are the truths which have ever been maintained—which have retained their hold on the human mind amidst all its wanderings—which come to us with the whole weight of a catholic authority. Well, now, admitting that we can, in this way, decide which are catholic and which merely partial traditions, yet this appeal to universal consent is strictly a subjective one. As we have before shown, we rest our confidence, in this case, not upon the tradition itself, but upon the inward susceptibility there is in the universal human consciousness to decide what notions are



to be maintained, and what to be rejected. If we depended upon the tradition, *as tradition*, then the more universal it were to become, the more would it be subjected to disturbing causes, and the more likely would it be to come to us in a perverted form. The reason why universality of consent gives us confidence in any doctrine, is not because it proves a genuine tradition (for it would rather prove the contrary), but because it demonstrates a universal mental and moral sympathy with it in the constitution of the human mind. Here, therefore, we say, the test of truth, the principle of certitude, is by no means objective, but is strictly subjective; it is a test residing in human nature itself, and not in the outward validity of any supernatural communications. In a word, in whatever way you seek to verify your traditions, in whatever way you attempt to separate the true from the false, it always turns out that the final principle of evidence is of a rational nature; that the verity of the tradition, therefore, necessarily reposes in some sense or other upon the authority of the human reason.

Finally, let us come into close combat with the very supposition itself upon which the theory of tradition we are now considering is based, the supposition, namely, that there was really a primitive revelation granted to man at his creation, and that we find in this the elements of all primary truth. Now, to say nothing about the difficulty of proving this, what, we ask, must have been the

nature of such a revelation, supposing it to exist? According to the theory in question, the human mind, considered in itself, was a blank; it contained no elements of truth—no natural sympathy with it—no faculties by which it could be discovered; but while in this state, the Creator brings, by some unknown process, words, ideas, facts, and infuses them into the empty void of this primitive mind, and thus imparts to succeeding humanity all the seeds of future knowledge.

Against this theory, when clearly stated, there is not only a stubborn improbability that forcibly suggests itself, but we naturally ask how the theory itself can claim for itself even a possibility, unless indeed the knot be cut by some "*deus ex machina*," by some direct miraculous intervention. Supposing the mind to have existed primitively in this state of blank unsusceptibility, and supposing truth to be then communicated to it in words, what effect could those words have produced upon such a mind?

Where truth is conveyed to us in words, it presupposes some internal preparation, some subjective power or susceptibility; something in the man that can seize upon the word, and feel and appropriate its meaning. Accordingly, we are forced to come to this admission, that to a mind in such a state as we have described, no verbal revelation could possibly have been made; the words would have fallen dead upon the ear; truth never could have taken its abode in a soul where there

was no soil to receive it, no previous light by which to behold it. We must frame our hypothesis of a primitive revelation, therefore (to make it at all feasible), upon a model quite different from this mechanical theory; we must suppose, that if the Creator willed to communicate truth to his creature, he gave him a mind previously capable of feeling it, previously capable of sympathizing in it: in one word, the first revelation of God to man must have been an *inward subjective revelation*. He gave him truth from heaven—admitted; but how? By imparting to him a reason and a conscience; by creating him in sympathy with nature, with beauty, with virtue; by making him in his own image, and then breathing into him the breath of life. Here, accordingly, the principle of tradition, if logically and consistently carried out, again breaks down, and that, too, in its very last resource, and in the moment of its supposed triumph. It says, All our primary knowledge is divine, it comes from God—it is received by direct communication from his hands. Truly so, we reply; our knowledge is divine, but it is so because humanity itself is divine. It comes from God; truly so, because *we* came forth from God. It flows to us from heaven; truly so, because man receives all his inspiration, all his mental life direct from heaven. But here, you perceive, the objective principle in its highest elevation, merges itself into the subjective; the truth, that knowledge is divine, remains, but it remains not to bear witness, as these

philosophers would have it, to the delusiveness of the human faculties, as though they could never have developed truth for themselves; but rather to show that knowledge is divine, just for this reason, that man, who realizes it, is himself originally, and in the great scheme of his faculties and feelings, a child of the Divinity.

So it is, then, that in the end the very theory of traditionalism we have been combating, merges into the light and sunshine of philosophic truth. It began by denying the subjective validity of the human reason, and pointing it merely to outward sources of knowledge. These different sources of certitude, these different stages of authority, have been successively discussed; the authority of the parent, to which the mind is first subject, merges itself into the authority of those documents to which the parent himself appeals; the interpretation of these documents points to another and living authority, residing in the different communities of mankind throughout the Christian world; the authority of these communities, again, merges into the catholic tradition of the christianized consciousness of mankind at large; and the authority of this catholic tradition merges, at length, into the primitive revelation, which was granted to mankind at the very cradle of his history. Can we stop here, then, and say that we have found the lowest basis, after all, on which the certitude of our knowledge is grounded? Far from it. Analyze this primitive revelation, and it likewise merges into an *à priori* principle,

into the great, the living, the eternal truth, that humanity is itself divine; that this very primitive revelation consists in man's partaking of the mind and the moral image of Deity; and that in this sense we may ever affirm the high truth, uttered of old by the venerable patriarch of Arabia, "that there is a spirit in men, and that the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding."

In fine, there is no idea that we are more anxious to draw forth, to illustrate, to impress upon the whole spirit of our age, than this—the essential divinity of human nature, a divinity which the Christian consciousness eminently and uniformly asserts. Let this idea be lost, and we lose with it our hold upon all that ennobles, enriches, and inspires the mind—all that calls it forth to noble enterprises—all that animates it at once to endurance and to active endeavour.

In the man who looks meanly upon human nature, not indeed in its degradation, but in its essential elements, there may appear at first sight a plausible humility; but it is the humility rather of a grovelling littleness than that of real generosity. Will any one say that, by making this assertion, we are overlooking the moral evils in which humanity is universally plunged? Quite the contrary; we are rather placing them in clearer light. It is the man who depreciates the essential elements of human nature to whom moral evil loses its turpitude. Crime can have but little responsi-

bility attached to it, when there is essentially in our nature no voice of conscience to be heard protesting against it; and moral purity can have but little elevation about it, as far as man is concerned, when it is regarded as a foreign element grafted, without our concurrence, upon a dry and miserable stock.

Regarded in this point of view, the principle of tradition easily becomes an ally to all injustice and oppression; as we see, that in France it has ever been the apologist of absolute and irresponsible power. If man be worthless in his nature, and derives all his elevation from the objective influence of these traditions, then there is at once ample ground on which grasping pretenders, who dare to assume a peculiar priority as the favoured channel of primeval authority, may arrogate for themselves a position above their fellow-men, and trample the less favoured down to the dust of their asserted original degradation. On the other hand, once let the truth go forth that humanity, *in its essential constituents*, is divine, and who shall dare with impunity to crush or to defile the image of God?

Reduce mankind on the one side to a mere piece of living mechanism, into which truths and ideas are cast like letters into a receptacle, and you expose him to all the abuses for which the ambitious and the designing will employ the mere instruments of their passions and purposes. The ignorant man and the vicious may be righteously despised

on this principle, for as yet he bears no trace of the Divinity, and may be properly regarded as little better than the brutes which perish. But let it be known, let it be felt, that man, *as man*, is of infinite worth, that he is not a mere channel for truth to flow through, but a living and wondrous emanation from the Infinite, containing a countless treasure in his very nature, and you surround every human being with an atmosphere of inviolability, which scorn and injustice can only invade at their peril. So true is it, that the primary view we take of the human mind, in relation to the sources of its knowledge, bears down upon the whole theory of human rights.

My friends and fellow-countrymen, it is not merely to maintain a favourite metaphysical hypothesis, that we would earnestly combat against the spirit of traditionalism in our modern society; it is because this theory, when carried out, degrades humanity, robs man, as man, of his native dignity, strips him of his inalienable rights, gives a plausible apology for favouritism towards one class, and oppression towards another, and tends to set up a spiritual despotism in the world which enslaves the mind in fetters worse than those which were ever rivetted upon the limbs of the African outcast.

Philosophical ideas, believe me, however dry in their details, are mighty in their results; and it is on this ground that we contend earnestly for principles on which, whatever many may think

to the contrary, the peace, the happiness, the progress of the world, are deeply and universally involved.

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### POSTSCRIPT TO THE THIRD LECTURE.

THE sentiments advocated in this Lecture, owing to the comparative rareness with which the problem is mooted in this country, require some little fencing against ambiguity and misunderstanding. If any one imagine that we are here seeking the *origin* of all our religious knowledge, he may well be startled at the conclusions to which we lead him forward. Viewing the subject in this light, we should see the pupil we are imagining, first, getting free from all parental instruction; next, rejecting all the teaching of books, and the Bible amongst them; thirdly, repudiating the doctrines of every Christian community, as well as the catholic tradition of the Christian world; and then, lastly, throwing himself entirely upon the subjective intuitions of the human reason, as his last and only suitable resource.

Now, let it be clearly understood that this is in no sense whatever the drift or intention of our remarks. We are not here seeking the *origin* of our knowledge, but the ground of its subjective certitude, and this, moreover, not in reference to Christian doc-



trine, but to the foundation-principles of moral and philosophical truth—truth which the Bible itself *presupposes* to exist in the mind of man, and to which it constantly appeals, under the terms, light, reason, conscience, &c. Here, accordingly, we are led exactly to the same conclusions as those we arrive at in the other Lectures, namely, that the final appeal for the certitude of such intuitions is *the common consciousness of the universal man*.

First of all, we considered whether such a ground of certitude could be found in parental tradition, and decided in the negative. Next, we proceeded to documents, and particularly to the sacred records; and we found that no ground of certitude upon *fundamental philosophical* questions could be found here, just because the Bible itself presupposes them, and is interpreted differently according to the state in which these primary intuitions exist in the mind of the interpreter. How shall we find, then, whether the conceptions with which we approach the Word of God, to form from it a system of truth, are correct? We must appeal, says the traditionist, to communities. But here there is no final repose, for the question comes, Which community is correct? Or shall we appeal to catholic tradition? But here, again, what is to distinguish the true in it from the false?

Driving the question forward in this way from step to step, we find that the traditionist takes refuge, at length, in the primitive offering of the Creator to his new and wondrous creature. Here,

accordingly, we grapple with the traditional principle in its last resource, and have shown that the certitude of those great, fundamental, human intuitions, which are our *primitive* light in all questions of religious and moral interest, could not have been *verbally* imparted without implying an absurdity, but must have been involved in the intellectual constitution and moral nature of the human soul itself.

This conclusion we regard as undeniably true. Call them what you will, yet the universal reason, the common sense, the moral susceptibility, the grand vital intuitions of mankind at large, are here our best, our only certain guide. Sweep away these, and how shall we approach a divine revelation; sweep away these, and how shall we conceive of the Infinite; sweep away these, and how shall we recognise 'harmony in the universe, beauty in virtue, and Divinity in revelation? Without them man becomes a hollow channel, through which sensations and ideas are made to flow, by some supreme constraint; with them, and by them alone, he becomes essentially divine, and capable of engrafting a heavenly element, granted to him through an inspired revelation, upon his nature. Such is the drift of all our remarks; a drift which we should not have thought it necessary to expound anew, had we not experienced the readiness with which many minds can lose sight of the real question, and evolve a conclusion altogether foreign from our real intention. Of the result of sound and earnest thinking

upon such topics, I am least of all afraid. If I am found in error, I shall then be put right in a spirit of truthfulness and love; if I am right, my sentiments will be responded to with pleasure and satisfaction. Logical pedantry alone misrepresents a man's meaning; chuckles over a minor fallacy, though it be in the path towards truth; and is more anxious for a victory that compromises what is right, than willing to make an acknowledgment that, duly improved, leads us back from the path of error and confusion.

## LECTURE IV.

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### ON THE PRINCIPLE OF COMMON SENSE AS A PHILOSOPHICAL TENDENCY.

IN the three preceding Lectures we have discussed, at some length, three of the principal philosophical tendencies of the present day. There was, first, the widely spread tendency to depend entirely upon the information derived from the senses; there was, secondly, the tendency to fall back upon the individual reason, and thus to render all philosophy purely subjective both as to its processes and its certainty. In the last Lecture we came to the discussion of the objective principle in philosophy, that, namely, which altogether denies the validity of the human reason in the struggle for truth, and points us to those outward intimations of a higher authority which we have in documentary and popular tradition.

These three modes of viewing the principles of human knowledge we have termed philosophical tendencies. It would not be, strictly speaking

correct to call them philosophical methods, because a philosophical method only exists when any tendency works itself clear, and gives rise to a formal, connected, and logical system of rules, by which we are to proceed in the elimination of truth. Thus the importance of appealing to outward facts, which came into general acknowledgment at the fall of the scholastic philosophy, indicated the growth of a philosophical tendency; the "*Novum Organum*" of Bacon was a philosophical method, to which that tendency gave rise.

In the present Lectures we have ever aimed, as we professed to do, at illustrating tendencies, rather than methods. Several methods, indeed, might have been enumerated under each tendency. Under the positive tendency, for example, are included many distinct systems of philosophy besides that of Bacon—systems which have successively played their part in the intellectual history of England and France, from the time of Locke, down to the publication of Comte's "*Cours de Philosophie Positive*." In like manner, under the individualist tendency, we might have described the philosophy of Kant, and the still more stringent method of Fichte, together with all the other marked efforts of the subjective principle. And, lastly, in the third instance, we might have exhibited the process by which the objective or traditional tendency has given rise to the systems of Gale, of Bonald; of the Abbé de la Mennais (in his earlier writings), besides many others of a lesser reputation.

To go through all the methods, however, of the present day, would, in fact, be nothing more or less than to give a complete history of modern philosophy. I trust, therefore, that my object will be properly understood as confining itself to the illustration of certain tendencies which are at work in modern society, and out of which the different specific philosophies from time to time develop themselves.

In the preceding cases, I have been obliged to assume somewhat of a polemical tone; for, notwithstanding our admission, that each of the tendencies already enumerated contains some validity in it— notwithstanding the unquestionable fact, that the senses, the individual reason, and the stream of human tradition, all have their uses, and all bring us into contact with certain elements of truth; yet, when we make any of these the sole, ultimate basis of human knowledge, and thus elevate them into being the supreme judge or test of truth, we are guilty of a procedure which infallibly ends in a vast amount of error and confusion. In the present Lecture, however, we are polemics no longer; we have now no principle, no tendency before us to oppose. The object of this night's investigation is rather to point out, as near as may be, what is the real procedure of the higher philosophy, what is verily the ultimate appeal for truth. In accomplishing this purpose, I do not intend to lay down any determinate philosophical method, since this would by no means prove a task to be

concentrated in a single, and that a popular, lecture; but I hope to point out in distinct, yet general terms, what is the philosophical tendency towards which our own hopes are directed, and out of which we believe the most powerful and fruitful methods for the future development of truth are destined to flow forth, to fertilize and bless the world.

With regard to the name of this philosophical tendency, I am not, at present, very particular. The term "eclecticism" is decidedly objectionable, because it seems to involve the mere juxtaposition of other methods, and to give us only a motley, syncretic result; whereas the system I maintain, as you will soon perceive, carries out its researches and results quite independently of any other school or system whatever.

The term "philosophy of progress" might be employed to convey our meaning, since it certainly designates one very important element in our system, that, namely, which affirms the constant development of moral ideas along the pathway of human history. But on this appellation we do not insist. The term "philosophy of common sense," taken, not in the acceptation in which it is sometimes used, as being the result of unscientific, in opposition to systematic and logical thinking, but taken in that particular acceptation in which it implies an appeal to the common or universal reason of the human race, in its progress along the course of time, this term, might likewise

serve to designate *one* very important feature at least in the system we have now to describe.

About words and definitions, however, I am not now so anxious, as about principles and ideas; so that, leaving the phraseology to be settled as time and circumstances may fix, I shall go on to expound what appears to me to be the real nature of philosophy and of philosophical research, by affirming and illustrating a series of propositions.

I. First, then, we affirm, as a fundamental truth, that humanity, being a divine creation, was designed to accomplish a given course, and, by time and labour, to fulfil a given destiny.

This is a proposition which, to a devout and contemplative mind, requires, I think, but little proof and illustration. There are few truths resting on moral evidence more clear and certain than the fact, that everything which has been brought into being by an intelligent Creator, was brought into being for some distinct end, and that this end must at length be assuredly accomplished. To deny a specific end would be the same thing as denying either power or intelligence in the Creator. Even man himself, with his poor modicum of intelligence, never works connectedly without an end, much less the great power, in the infinite reason of God.

If all things, therefore, have been created for an end, it must be in the highest degree certain that *humanity* has a destiny before it in the world, which it is at once designed and adapted to accom-



plish. The destiny of humanity, moreover, cannot be merely composed of the various and separate destinies of those individual minds of which it consists. Humanity in a certain, and that a veritable sense, is a unity. It is endowed with capacities, which can only be perfected by the combination of minds; there is a life running through the whole mass, which, in the isolated individual, is entirely lost; there is a divine plan in human history, which shows that all minds are closely linked together in the chain of being; in brief, there is a purpose, a destiny, an end, which can only be accomplished by humanity as a whole—accomplished, that is to say, by time and by united labour.

Philosophy and religion have alike set their seal upon this great and living truth. Every system of social science, for example, looks forward to some grand consummation, where the principles of morality and political wisdom shall have attained their perfection, and man repose in the sunshine of harmony and peace. The imagination of St. Simon, of Charles Fourier, and that of every dreamy philanthropist, who has maintained any broad scheme of association, all have recognised a rhythm and a progress in human development, and pointed to a grand destination, when the whole cycle shall be completed. The abstract philosophy of Germany, likewise, has given, in its united voice to the truth, that reason, embodied in humanity, as well as in nature, is ever rolling onward in its mighty course,

to realize on earth and in time the perfected image of the Absolute and the Divine.

Even positivism itself, with all its starred and stiff adherence to external and empirical facts, yet warms into a momentary blush of imagination and of hope, as it describes the several stages of human development, and looks forward to the time when human actions may be calculated, like so many mechanical forces, and the social fabric become like some vast machine, whose mighty movements can be computed down to their smallest results—a machine of infinite perfection, and yet, strange to say, according to their account, ever going forward without an intelligent designer, or a moving power.

With all these theories—that is to say, with the fundamental truth which lies at their basis—the voice of the Jewish, and the Christian revelation itself, fully coincides; for the Hebrew seer, and the Galilean apostles, alike point us to a progressive development of truth throughout the world, which must go onwards in its course until the peaceable kingdom and the millennial church shall realize the glorious end to which all human history has been unceasingly tending.

In brief, wherever you look upon creation, whatever you contemplate as the result of supreme intelligence, there you see the impress of a final purpose. The effort to accomplish this purpose is life, and life is necessarily progressive. The life of nature is an everlasting attempt to realize the

divine ideas, and, through them, the divine purposes. The life of mankind, in a higher sphere, is the same. Evils have to be overcome, abuses to be swept away, crimes to be subdued; every thing that mars the divine in its connection with the human, to be eradicated, and the great purposes of our first creation to be accomplished by embodying the image of the Infinite in *the finite will*. This is the basis—this the true philosophy of human progress. The end *must* be brought about; the eternal purpose *must* be realized: time, as it sweeps on in its mighty course, bears everything forward to this consummation; and labour, both mental and bodily, which is at once the natural condition of man, and the element by which he works out his earthly destiny—labour is ever clearing away the relics of worn-out institutions (those vestments of exploded notions), and building up new fabrics, which are to last their time, and then, mingling in one common grave, to make way for new symbols, the sure embodiments of more intense ideas.

To some minds, these sentiments might at first appear to involve nothing less than a rigid fatalism, as though man were the mere instrument of the divine purposes. But it is not so. In regarding humanity as a whole, and contemplating the end for which it was all created, we are simply grasping the great typical laws of human nature, while we leave the individual perfectly free. It does not depend on me, or thee, or any one else, whether

the purposes of Providence, in the creation of man, shall be accomplished. We may perchance oppose the laws of progress;—we are free to do so; but the result will be, either that we must be crushed before their resistless power, or else that the tide of human thought will roll quietly by, and leave us as standing monuments for the advancing age to look back upon, and see in us how useless it is for the individual will to oppose the Eternal purpose.

The fact, that a given result will be infallibly realized in a given number of human beings, does not in any way infringe upon the liberty of each as an individual. Statistics, for example, show us, that in such and such a country there will be a given amount of crime perpetrated during the next year; but does that necessarily involve *any one individual* in the guilt thereof, or oblige him to commit any portion of that guilt? Far from it. Such facts show us that there may be laws in the mass, which in no way circumscribe the individual will; and it is in such laws as these, or we would rather say in a certain moral and intellectual life, running through the combined human consciousness, that we see the elements of human progress, and the certainty that we are speeding onwards to a great end, in which the Divine Mind will realize fully and objectively its own great and beneficent purposes.

II. This brings us to a second proposition, namely, That the whole course of human history depends upon the regular and progressive develop-

ment of ideas. There is a great difference between the development of ideas in their reflective and scientific form, and the spontaneous development of them in the popular mind. We do not mean to affirm, in the above proposition, that the flow of human history has ever been regulated by *scientific* ideas, formally and systematically stated. So far from this, it would be much nearer the reality to say, that the logical statement of truths has ever come after, and arisen out of, their primary working in the popular mind. What we do mean to affirm, however, is this—that all human events, all the movements of national activity, all the struggles of agitation and of warfare—in one word, all the outward and visible scenes of human history, have been but the signs and effects of inward thoughts and impulses. The real history of the world is first enacted within the unseen chambers of the human soul. There are the first struggles of thought and passion; there, the mainsprings of outward action; there, the wondrous heart-conflicts which are afterwards re-enacted upon the visible surface of human things. If we would study the actual history of mankind, therefore, we must study it in the development of its ideas, for upon these all progressive and historical events have really depended.

The truth of this position might be illustrated in a thousandfold manner. Ponder the history of all the celebrated wars which have ravaged the world in different ages. At first sight, they may appear to have depended upon the will or the passions of

a few individuals, but in reality they have been the struggle of mighty principles for predominance and conquest. Was it not so with the wars of Greece and Asia, when the Hellenic and Oriental mind struggled for predominance in the world? Was it not so with those of Rome, when the stern Roman spirit came into rough contact with the less rigid conceptions of other nations respecting government and social organization? Was it not so with the mighty campaigns of the Crusaders, when Europe precipitated itself upon Asia to satiate the almost maddening impulse of the one great ruling idea of the age? Were not the wars of the Reformation the combat of great ideas? Were not those of the French Revolution equally so? And in the struggles which even now seem pending over the fair soil of Italy, do we see any other than the progressive ideas of the nineteenth century rolling onwards over alp and ocean, and coming into conflict with the worn-out manners and institutions of the dark ages? Heroes may appear to be the main-springs of human struggle, but heroes are nothing more or less than embodiments of the mind and spirit of their age. In place of saying, "that all history is the shadow of great men," we should much rather say, that great men have been the *foci* or burning points of man's historical and progressive life.

The history of society, again, is the history of social ideas and intuitions. Just as the intellectual and vital principle of the animal gathers around

itself an organization fitted to its own instincts and faculties, so also does the mind of every age gradually clothe itself in the vestment of that social organization which is best adapted for carrying out its own purposes. It is not society which moulds the spirit of the age; it is the spirit of the age which organizes society. Laws and institutions, viewed in the gross, are the product of great moral intuitions. The legal code of a free country is the result of its mental and moral development. In proportion as the great conceptions respecting justice between man and man, respecting the value of humanity in its essence, as contrasted with the worthlessness of mere arbitrary and empty titles, respecting the nature and treatment of crime, and respecting the inalienable rights of the community—in proportion as these conceptions gradually expand, exactly in the same proportion will they demand, and most assuredly give rise to, laws and institutions which shall be suited to their stage of development, and satisfy their inexorable requisitions.

Need I refer, still further, to the history of literature, poetry, and art? Literature and poetry are the forms in which the mind of an age and a people gives verbal expression to its sense of the sublime, the beautiful, or the true; while art is the manner in which genius gives body to our highest conceptions of nature, either in her real or ideal perfection. I do not, of course, pretend to furnish in these remarks precise definitions of these dif-

ferent branches of human activity; all I wish to make clear is this, that every outward development which characterizes a country or a people in any period of the world, is but the expression of certain intuitions, which have flowed through the national mind, which have had a vital growth in the mass, and which make their appearance externally, whether in the form of art, of science, of literature, or of poetry.

Precisely the same thing is true respecting the history of religious institutions. Every age has had its conceptions of God and of man—of the Infinite and the finite; and every age has had some determinate mode of viewing the precise manner in which the relation of the one to the other should be conceived of and expressed. Spiritual ideas, working secretly in the religious consciousness of the age, make themselves visible in many ways. Sometimes they exhibit themselves in the modes and symbols of the popular worship; sometimes, again, they evince their power and activity by overturning these modes and symbols, and framing others more in accordance with their own varied or increased dimensions. Whatever scenes are transacted in the outward religious life of a people, be sure there are certain inward conceptions which are prompting to action, certain inward conceptions which are not fully satisfied by the reigning forms of worship, but are struggling to express themselves in some more appropriate outward form of activity or of devotion.



To multiply illustrations, however, of a truth so plain and obvious is unnecessary. It is manifest, that the human reason, viewed not in the individual but in the mass, has an *organic* development. The function of humanity, thus considered, is to unfold ideas by time and by labour. This function it carries on by the action of mind upon mind—by the gradual development of the human consciousness—by the brightening and clearing of its pure intuitions; and the results of all this internal process soon impress themselves upon human history—are seen in the struggles of nations and parties, and come forth in their laws and institutions, their manners, and social life, in their arts, their literature, and their religion. Moreover, there is a progressiveness in this inward development of ideas. Local civilization, it is true, may vary; the mission of a people to unfold some great idea may be accomplished, and then that people may pass away, as to their national existence, from the face of the earth; but while local civilization may vary, yet the progress of humanity is rhythmic and perpetual. One conception succeeds in due order another—each intuition in turn claims some degree of moral elevation above the last; the fall of an institution, yea, of an empire, may be but the signal of some new and better idea gaining the mastery over the past. Thus does the life of man flow forward in its course, thus does he march on from struggle to struggle, and, by the inward growth of his moral and intellectual consciousness, prepare

to realize the great purposes of Providence in his creation, his guidance, and unfailing support.

In these few sentences am simply comprising the plain results of the philosophy of history. History, we know, is no longer a dry enumeration of outward facts. Thanks to the progress of human thinking, it has now become *a science*, and rests upon principles as vital and as real as any other branch of philosophical research—a science, which may yet prove even of more real value to our social interests than all the brilliant discoveries in the domain of physical truth. Without lingering, however, any longer upon this branch of our subject, we must hasten on to a third proposition—one, too, which brings us somewhat nearer to our main point. We affirm,

III. That the great problem of philosophy is to bring the ideas or intuitions of every age into a clear, reflective, and logical form.

We have already explained, in a former Lecture, the distinction between the intuitional and the logical faculty. We have shown that by intuition, truth is brought home to the mind immediately and presentatively; just as by perception we come into immediate contact with the external world. By the logical understanding, on the contrary, we only acquire truth mediately and representatively; we know it not in the concrete, but simply in the abstract—not in its direct reality, but in its representative capacity.

By the intuitional faculty, again, we come into

direct contact with *the matter* of our knowledge, we see the real concrete thing before us; by the logical faculty, on the other hand, we see nothing but *the form*—a form which becomes only the mere symbol of truth, the very instant our intuitions die away. In addition to this, we showed that our intuitional consciousness is *generic*; that it belongs to man as man; that it grows up to perfection, not in the individual, but in the race; that it has a final development in humanity at large; while our logical consciousness, on the other hand, is *individual*, being the result of those fixed laws of the understanding which every man virtually possesses.

Science, accordingly, must consist in the combined action of intuition and logic. Intuitions there must be; otherwise there would be no real, living, concrete truth in the matter, but the whole would be simply an empty play of logical terms. On the other hand, there must be logical processes also; otherwise we should never bring the knowledge which we have, spontaneously involved in our intuitions, into the scientific form.

Now, from these principles we can very easily deduce what must be the real problem of philosophy. The matter of all our higher knowledge, of all that which we may embrace under the title of intellectual and moral truth, is given in the intuitional consciousness; the scientific form is mediated, on the other hand, by the logical consciousness. The problem of philosophy, then,

is to unite the matter with the form—to grasp the truth, which is embodied in the intuitions of the age, and bring it out logically in the shape of pure idea.

This position may be rendered clear by a few illustrations taken from different branches of human thought or activity. Turn to the region of æsthetics. You see different peoples presenting entirely different phenomena as to their perception of the beautiful. What, then, is the philosophy of art? I answer, the account which the understanding renders to itself of the nature and order of these phenomena—the explication of the spontaneous working of artistic genius, by reducing it to the form of intellectual conceptions. Fix your eye for a moment upon the state of Greece in the freshest bloom of its glory. The most prominent feature we observe at that time, is unquestionably the extraordinary creation of objects of beauty in almost every department of artistic skill. If you walk in imagination over the heights of Athens, the most perfect and imposing forms of architectural design meet the eye; if you contemplate the statues of the gods, nothing, you will say, was ever seen more exquisitely proportioned to the ideal of human symmetry; if you consider, still further, the whole structure of their language and poetry, the same artistic perfection, in another form, meets you at every turn. Now all this must have been the result of a certain state of consciousness, which had grown up amongst that people, and gradually developed, and as it were pictured itself

out in these different phenomena. The great point, then, for the philosophical or speculative mind here would be, to render an account of the phenomena of Grecian art. All these forms of beauty evidently repose upon the existence and the growth of certain ideas and intuitions. The reason why the Greek could produce them, and the Persian could not, was simply because the Greek mind had enjoyed a certain culture, which the barbaric had never yet received; it had gained high intuitions of beauty all its own; it had viewed the phenomena of nature under the most living and impressive conceptions; and in this way the æsthetic consciousness had been vitalized and unfolded, until it grew up in the mass of the people to a pitch of grandeur and of sensibility which had been hitherto altogether unknown. The problem of philosophy, then, so far as these phenomena are concerned, was to expound the glowing productions of the Greek mind—to show what thoughts they embodied—to point out the conceptions by which they were internally modelled—to bring, thus, the whole world of Grecian art into the region of pure idea.

This would have been the philosophy of art, as art then existed in the world. Since then, however, many other developments of the sublime and beautiful have existed, many others there are at present, and will yet be; but in every case the philosophy of art must be the account which the understanding renders to itself of the spontaneous

workings of artistic genius, as they have hitherto been made known to mankind.

This principle will be still more clearly illustrated if we pass from æsthetic to moral ideas. Fix your eye upon some other country (almost any one will answer), and contemplate it in reference to its domestic habits, social institutions, and public laws. Now laws and institutions (those, I mean, which are not merely local and arbitrary) are most manifestly the embodiment of moral ideas and principles. So evidently is this the case, that the moral growth of a people is almost perfectly indicated and expressed precisely by these social arrangements. In proportion as they are impartial, liberal, philanthropic, just, and free, in that proportion do they show that the just demands of humanity—that the real equality of mankind in the sight of his Maker—in brief, that the great eternal principles of moral truth, have been realized and grown up to life and activity in the consciousness of the nation at large. What, then, according to this, is moral philosophy? Is it a mere code of rules for our outward conduct? Is it a continued dispute, whether morality originates in the understanding or the feelings? Is it an acute quibbling about liberty and necessity—a liberty which nobody practically denies, and a necessity which nobody practically believes in? No! these, if you will, may be collateral questions, which come into the discussion of the whole subject; but moral philosophy, rightly viewed, is an attempt to render a

clear and intelligible account of the moral fact or phenomena of the world; it is to bring all the phases of human action, individual, social, national, into the region of idea, and show upon what great intuitions they are all based. Do not imagine for a moment that you can *rationalize* moral philosophy—do not imagine that you can deduce it all from certain logical definitions. Moral philosophy, like all other primordial sciences, is built upon a direct revelation coming from God himself to the interior consciousness of man. Your business as moralists is not to smother that divine revelation, by putting upon it the extinguishing idea of selfishness, utility, or anything of the kind; it is to look that heavenly light clearly and honestly in the face; to take it as primary, intuitional truth; to see how it develops itself in human life; and then to give it, if possible, a full statement in reflective and scientific form. Accordingly, we may say that the primary *material* of moral philosophy consists in those direct and spontaneous intuitions from which all moral action springs; that the *sphere* of moral philosophy embraces all the activity of mankind, in whatever capacity; and finally, that the *problem* of it is to reduce these intuitions of the moral consciousness, in their whole development, into the form of scientific truth.

As our moral perceptions, therefore, brighten and expand, in that proportion will our moral philosophy be broader and more expansive also. So that the perfection of an ethical system is to in-

clude all the moral consciousness of the age in one consecutive and logical construction; the phases of that consciousness, whether in the individual or the community, being given to us as facts in human nature. Exactly the same principle applies to the religious phenomena of every age. In every people we see the manifestation of a certain religious life. It may be polytheistic, it may be monotheistic, it may be heathen in its character, or it may be Christian. This religious life, whatever it may be, universally expresses itself in various forms of outward worship; and the whole problem of philosophy, and all it can do here, is to frame a formal theology out of the living religious intuitions of the age. You can no more rationalize theology than you can ethics; the one as well as the other springs from an *inward revelation*; and just according to the state of the religious consciousness (to the clearness of that inward revelation) at any given time, will be the real theology of that period; the problem of theological science being precisely this—to embody the conceptions given in our inward religious life into a whole system of formal, connected, and logical truth. And so it is with every branch of man's mental activity. Wherever there is truth of an intellectual or a moral nature—wherever there are intuitions which live and grow in the universal reason of mankind—there is the material for philosophy; there is the ground and impulse for the effort, which the speculative faculty in man ever makes, to render to itself an



account of its own spontaneous intelligence; there is the great problem set before us to bring the spontaneous product of the human reason into a reflective and scientific form. In doing this, we come upon the very ground-principles of human knowledge; for everything, as we proceed, has to be cleared up to the understanding, and every succeeding proposition to follow by a logical chain of sequence from the preceding.

It is the more necessary to impress these principles upon the minds of all thinking men, owing to the misunderstanding that has widely prevailed respecting the real problem of philosophy, and the contracted light in which it has been viewed. By many, it is supposed that all we have to do in philosophy is to take a kind of inventory of the faculties of the human mind, and deduce from thence a few practical lessons for the conduct of the understanding. It is not perceived that such a classification, however necessary and however correct, is, after all, but the mere *alphabet* of philosophy, properly so called. Right enough is it to investigate the faculties, to see what they include, and what they can do; but, so far, we are only looking after our tools—the great ocean of philosophy has not begun to be sounded—the very first attempt is not yet made to lay the actual foundations of human knowledge; that is to say, not one single branch of our spontaneous intuitions is yet brought into the light of abstract and reflective truth. As well may we say, that the bare letters of the alpha-

bet give us a complete language; as well, that the notes of the diatonic and chromatic scale are equivalent to a whole people's national music, as that the mere inventory of the human faculties, the mere tools of the science, give us a complete philosophy. Philosophy, we repeat, touches fundamentally upon every branch of human knowledge. It begins even by explaining our very sensations and perceptions, and ends not till it has reduced every sphere of our spontaneous activity, as far as it is possible to do so, into the form of a reflex science.

To the mere practical man, indeed, this may be very unnecessary; but, to the awakened understanding, it is the satisfaction of an impulse to know, which is as powerful as it is beneficent.

The beneficence of philosophy, I am aware, is sometimes doubted: the objection is often urged, that if philosophy only seeks to clear up what we already know—if it can only rest upon the material already furnished in the consciousness of mankind—if, in a word, the problem of philosophy is to explain common sense, then the only use it can be of is, merely to quibble over what needs no elucidation. About equally rational would it be to object, that it is absurd in physics to investigate the principles of gravitation, because every man knows how to keep himself upright, and that not even an idiot would invade the law by stepping over the edge of a precipice. We know that a physical principle, when it becomes a scientific truth, has a thousandfold application, of which we knew nothing

before; and just so is it with philosophy. The moment a broad principle is educed and brought into the light of a scientific fact, we can at once apply it to every branch of human knowledge; we can clear away with it a thousand errors or absurdities which cluster around the regions of unphilosophical thinking; and, by its suggestion, can point out the way to new developments of noblest truth. Philosophy, we say, is the last and clearest utterance of every age; it strips off the symbols in which truth is embodied and too often concealed; it clears away the errors and prejudices which encompass the mere spontaneous efforts of the human mind; it brings the real and universal intuitions of every age into the region of pure thinking; it gives a logical order and reflective validity to our knowledge; and thus, having received its primary material from the common reason of mankind, in its turn re-acts upon it, and prepares it for a still higher and fuller development hereafter. Action and re-action is the law of the universe; it is by this law that our intuitions and our logical understanding become mutually more and more perfect; and the history of this whole progress towards perfection is that which we term philosophy.

IV. We now come to a fourth proposition, namely, That the final appeal for the truth, which philosophy embodies, must be the universal reason or the "common consciousness" of mankind. Here, at length, we approach the main point to which all the preceding remarks have been directed, that,

namely, which seeks to determine the foundation-principle of certitude, in reference to all the higher branches of human knowledge. It is precisely according to the view we take respecting the ground of certitude, precisely according to the principle we assume as to our final appeal for truth, that the whole tendency, and, consequently, the whole method of our philosophy, will ever be determined. We have already seen this illustrated in the instances which have, on previous occasions, come under our notice. So sure as a man appeals to the senses as the final test of truth and falsehood, the inevitable result is, that his entire philosophy will be of a purely sensational character; the whole tendency of his speculations will be towards the elevation of empirical facts into a complete body of science; and the method he assumes will be that of positivism—the simple induction of general from particular and sensuous observations. Again; supposing we elevate the individual reason into the supreme judge, of what nature will be the whole bent and method of our philosophy then? Evidently, it will be of the subjective character, expecting to find the germs of all truth within the individual self, and essaying to develop the whole mass of human knowledge, in each case, out of man's own interior being.

Or, thirdly, supposing we start with the principle that the human faculties are unsound—that no truth whatever can be derived from them—that we must look to a purely objective source as the only ground

of certitude; then, as a matter of course, our whole philosophical methodology will turn upon the examination and interpretation of documents and traditions. In every case the final court of appeal determines the character of the whole philosophical methodology which we employ.

In pointing out, then, as we now have to do, the real ground of certitude, or the final appeal we possess for philosophical truth, we are touching upon the very central point of philosophy itself—we are determining the one grand question which gives the whole direction to our researches, as it regards their aim, their method, and their results.

Now, let me first of all remind you of one important fact, to which we have before alluded, namely, that science, properly so termed, involves a two-fold element—I mean matter and form. The actual matter of our knowledge comes to us immediately and presentatively in direct intuitions, and appears full and vivid, just in proportion as our whole mental consciousness becomes elevated, purified, and enlightened; on the other hand, the scientific form is given to it by the logical understanding. Strictly speaking, therefore, there is a two-fold ground of appeal for the validity of our knowledge; the one of which applies to the formal, and the other to the material element. As far as the formal element in our philosophy is concerned, we are perfectly right in submitting it to the test of the logical faculty, the individual reason. The laws of logic are completely fixed and defined.

Admit that we have a logical understanding at all, and there is no difficulty in determining the correctness of any system of philosophy which comes before us, as far as its form and its consecutiveness are concerned. Every sound reasoning mind can comprehend the principles of logical science; and consequently, we only require to examine a system accurately—to look to the propriety of its terms—to the statement of its definitions—to the construction of its various parts—to the whole consecutiveness of its propositions, in order to judge, with the most decisive accuracy, as to whether it be or be not admissible and correct. It is just because the whole formal construction of a system of philosophy can be committed to the test of the individual judgment, that many have so incorrectly come to the conclusion, that the individual judgment is able to serve as a final test of truth itself. They forget that the logic of a system is not the whole ground of its accuracy; so far from this, that the logic of it may be incorrect, while yet there may be an immense amount of truth in the fundamental conceptions; that the logic, on the other hand, may be faultless, while yet the whole system may be an empty and worthless play upon mere abstract ideas. From the formal constitution of a philosophical system, then, let us turn to the *matter*, to the real conceptions which lie at its foundation, to the living ideas which flow through the logical processes; and here, we affirm, the only final appeal we can have is to the common consciousness, or, as it is some-

times expressed, to the common sense of mankind. This is, in fact, a direct conclusion from the whole course of our previous remarks; if they have been well grounded, the proposition now under our review must also be admitted as equally veracious.

To demonstrate this, let us recall to you the path we have traversed. First of all, we have seen that humanity, being a divine creation, was made for some great purpose—a purpose that it must ultimately accomplish by the whole course which it is destined to run, and through which it will at length rise to its high and holy destination. This fact having been pondered, we found next that the whole course of human history turns upon the development of ideas; that all outward events are but the signs or symbols through which man's inward thoughts and principles express themselves, and by which they work upon the material interests of the race at large; that the real history of man, therefore, is the history of the development of the universal reason.

The third proposition brought us to the fact, that philosophy has for its great problem, the statement, or, as we might better term it, the construction, of the ideas and intuitions which lie hid in the spirit of every age, into a logical or scientific system. What, then, we ask, follows from this? It follows, that as the *material* of philosophy is all taken from the common consciousness of mankind, so far as it is as yet developed in the world, the final appeal for the validity of this material, as a portion of

human truth, must be made to the common sense or common reason of humanity at large.

We may select almost any branch of philosophical truth in order to illustrate this principle. For simplicity of illustration, I will refer you once again to the subject of music—a case in which the intuitional element is peculiarly apparent. I will suppose that we were desirous of explaining, upon philosophical grounds, certain principles of harmony and melody, in reference to the power which music exercises over the human mind. Suppose that some combinations of tone were felt to produce a given effect *upon ourselves*—to awaken perhaps certain definite feelings and intuitions; and suppose that we proceeded to build up our theory upon the fact of such effects being uniformly produced upon *our own* mind. Another person, we may imagine, contests the principle; he admits, indeed, that our theory is logically correct—that it has scientific consistency about it; but he denies that the intuitions themselves, upon which the whole reposes, are veracious, and thus strikes at the very facts on which we build our system. How should we, in this case, proceed in order to substantiate the truth of the intuitions in question? Evidently we must appeal to other minds; we must see if they are affected in the same way; we must notice whether the expansion of the musical sensibility in man invariably leads to the same subjective results. If this is not the case, we at once begin to doubt the truth of our own theory,



and attribute the phenomena in question to certain idiosyncrasies in ourselves; if, however, it be truly the case, then the voice of the universal consciousness is triumphant, and we admit the validity of the theory as resting upon the universally developed intuitions of the human mind.

Now, the very same kind of appeal holds good in every question in which we have to determine; not, indeed, the logical accuracy of a system, but the reality of the conceptions upon which it is based. It is so, for example, in the case of moral truth. Some men, impelled by certain metaphysical principles they have assumed, strenuously affirm the utilitarian hypothesis of morals, and deny the existence of any peculiar moral sensibility in man. To what test, then, or to what authority, do we appeal? Some have imagined that we can appeal to the individual judgment, to the mere logical understanding; and because the utilitarian system can undoubtedly be built up logically, that its formal accuracy demonstrates its whole truth. Nothing, however, can be more false than such a conclusion. It is quite possible for an ingenious mind to construct twenty moral systems, each one of which shall fully satisfy the claims of logical order, and *appear* to account for the phenomena in question. The real test, however, to which we must appeal for the elements we start with, is that of the universal consciousness of mankind. Is there such a thing as a moral sensibility in human nature? Are there intuitions of good and evil quite distinct from

the ideas of the useful and noxious? Do the actions, the languages, the habits, the laws, the whole phenomena of mankind at large, show that such moral elements really exist within us? And, lastly, can we trace the brightening growth of these moral intuitions in the progress of human history? Can we see that they have been expanding up to the present hour, and spreading the principles of justice and beneficence around us more and more? Here must be our test. If the sense of justice and truth can be shown to be partial, depending upon mere local and assignable causes, then let the theory of utility stand its ground; but if such moral conceptions be proved constituents of human nature universally, sometimes, it may be, slumbering for want of nourishment, but ever appearing where there is room for their development and their growth, and ever brightening as the age advances, then let the *eternal law of right* be maintained inviolate, as the voice of the eternal Lawgiver within the soul; and in place of the cold calculations of utility, let us trust in the omnipotence of moral truth, and determine not to do simply what may seem to advance our interests, but rather to say, "*Fiat justitia—ruat cœlum.*"

Exactly the same appeal to the universal consciousness or common sense of humanity holds good in relation to man's religious nature and destiny. The consistency of our theology as a formal system can be tested by logic, as was done by the scholastic writers; but not the truth of those great funda-

mental religious conceptions, to which theology owes all its life and all its power. For the truth and adequacy of these, we must appeal to the religious consciousness of mankind—the religious consciousness, I mean, enlightened by all the aids and influences, natural or revealed, which lie open to us from so many sources. The truth, which Christianity has to develop, lies potentially in the word, just as the plant or tree lies concealed in the seed: but as the seed must come in contact with the warmth of heaven and the moisture of the soil ere it can produce the flower and the fruit, so also must the germ of truth, contained in the inspired records of the apostolic Church, come into contact with the activity of thinking minds and the warmth of loving hearts, before that which is but a germ in the word becomes a living and practical reality in the world. The human consciousness is the soil in which these germs of truth vegetate and grow; it is at once the instrument and medium of its development; and to it, consequently, we must appeal as the great authority, which can alone solve, in the course of time and by the effort of labour, the great controversies which for so many centuries have agitated the world. As the religious consciousness of humanity, prompted and refined by all divine aids, becomes more perfect and more pure, in that proportion shall we find controverted points thrown into new relations; apparent contradictions merged and reconciled in higher principles; and the great tide of human thought rolling all

things, even the most apparently paradoxical, onwards and upwards to the light of day.

The appeal to the human consciousness at large is open, however, to one apparent objection, namely this, that if this "*communis sensus*" (which is assumed as the supreme judge of truth) be perpetually growing and expanding, then the *standard of truth* must be ever varying. Centuries ago that standard could not have been what it is now; centuries hence it will have made an equal progress. Now, to obviate this objection, we at once admit that the standard of truth to man does vary; that it is progressive, and consequently, that we are unable to say at any given time that we have carried our philosophy to the highest point, and attained the full measure of truth which is accessible to man. Humanity, we assert, is in progress; the standard of truth, the universal human reason, is in progress; truth itself, viewed subjectively and in relation to man, is also in progress. The fact, therefore, that our test varies, so far from being an objection, is only a surer indication of its reality. Had we now a fixed test, humanity would outgrow it; that which would serve for one age would not be suited to the next, or, if it were, then human knowledge must be confined within certain attained dimensions, where it would grow stiff and dead, losing all its vitality in stagnation and consequent decay. Life is progress, stagnation is death. The life of humanity consists in the eternal, unceasing evolution of its great idea. Let this but stop, and

the consummation of all things would be at hand;—but so long as this rolls onward in its course, life is in action; truth is coming more and more into the light of day; the purposes of Providence are still unfolding; and philosophy has its work to do, namely, to bring the fuller intuitions of every succeeding age into the region of pure ideas, and to link them together in one harmonious body of scientific truth.

We have now only one point remaining, which requires some further explanatory remarks, and that is, respecting the manner in which the philosophical test we have assumed is to be practically applied. Many a man might be inclined to object—The foregoing principles look very well as a mere matter of theory; it may seem very plausible to represent the universal reason of mankind as the final criterion of truth; but how are we to discover in any particular case what the voice of humanity really is? or to what quarter must we look in order to gain, upon this principle, a clear response in any question of difficulty and of doubt? Is not the universal reason or common sense of mankind something very indefinite; and must there not, consequently, be a corresponding indefiniteness attaching itself to the principle of common sense, as a guarantee for the validity of our knowledge?

These objections demand some consideration. And, first of all, we may remark, that if there be some degree of indefiniteness and of difficulty about the application of the principle in question, it is

not a difficulty *peculiar* to this principle alone, but one which attaches itself equally to all other philosophical methods. The appeal to the senses, for example, is by no means very clear and satisfactory, even to those who profess implicitly to receive it, when the question is to decide upon points of a general and more abstract kind. The appeal to the individual reason, again, is proverbially indefinite; and not a few, seeing the eternal doubts to which it gives rise, have actually given it up in despair, and thrown themselves either into the arms of rank scepticism or of absolute authority. Will any one, again, claim for the principle of tradition any high degree of distinctness? or is it very easy, amidst all the mass of fiction and fable which has come down to us from early times, just to sift out the wheat, and cast away the heaps of chaff in which it is concealed? Difficulty, then, in the application of our adopted criterion of common sense is by no means peculiar to this principle alone. In fact, were the prize we seek in the discovery of truth to be too easy of access, we should begin to doubt its genuineness and reality. Not the smallest intellectual treasure is proffered to us without labour, much less that which is to decide upon the matured fruits of all our thinking and of all our toil.

Another remark we would make, preliminary to the main point, is this, that we must never expect to find a criterion which will decide categorically, yes or no, in cases of contest or of difficulty. Long

disputed points are generally found out to be bitter delusions in the end. The paradox involved in them, and the struggle to which it gives rise, commonly originate from the fact, that the whole question is looked at on both sides from a low and incompetent point of view; so that a valid criterion, instead of satisfying the combatants, would probably send them both away alike unanswered, and only point them to some higher principle, in which their doubts and differences may disappear. In fact, hard and perplexing questions can never be intelligently decided by a direct response, as though from an oracle; and even if they were so decided, the decision would not prove by any means satisfactory. What we want in a criterion of truth, is some principle, the application of which gradually dissipates our errors; which elevates our consciousness, so as to take a broader view of the whole fabric of human knowledge; which strengthens our intuitions; and which enables us thus to rise higher and higher towards the light after which we seek. An absolute criterion there cannot be; for to our imperfect minds it would be absolutely useless. What we require is a method, by which we can ascend to the full elevation of the age in which we live, and get the clearest view of grand principles which the present state of human development can afford—a method which will tell us clearly in what we are wrong, and point out to us the direction in which we may be ever approaching nearer to the right. This is

what we require in a criterion—this is what we ask for in our final appeal; and this, in our soberest judgment, is the very office which the common consciousness of humanity alone can fulfil.

In order to apply this criterion, however, many requisites are necessary. It demands, first of all, a mind entirely free from bias and prejudice. A prejudiced mind will never hear or interpret the voice of humanity aright. Devoted to a given set of opinions, or to the principles of a party, and influenced perhaps still further by national peculiarities, it has an ear opened for a certain number of voices, and closed hermetically against all the rest. Nothing is more common than for men to think their own views and principles to be synonymous with the truth, and to judge of the world's progress by its greater or less approach to them. To such minds the common consciousness of mankind speaks no intelligible words; the din of faction drowns its still small voice, and we can only leave them with the hope that they, in a certain sphere, may perform their part, so that the partial truth they do reveal may be retained, and the errors in which they become involved may be counteracted by some opposing tendency.

Again; the application of the principle we have maintained demands great historical research. We want to know the voice of humanity at large—say, upon some point of moral or intellectual truth;—then let us look back upon the past; let us see in what way mankind have viewed the subject during



ages that are gone by; let us trace the whole progress of human opinion and feeling on the question; and, in this way, we may follow it up to the present day, and be able to estimate exactly the elevation to which the human consciousness upon that question has now reached. In all the great subjects of moral, of social, and of religious interest, history points out to us a vital development in mankind at large. The history of philosophy, more especially, brings this great fact home to our perception, so much so, that, by its light, we may trace the intuitions of mankind brightening and expanding in their course, and recognise the effect of this expansion impressed upon all the events of human history—upon manners, upon institutions, upon social and religious life. If we would estimate, then, the voice of humanity aright, we must enter into these historical researches; we must track the expansion of man's ideas through the walks of literature, of science, of art, of philosophy; and in this way shall we be enabled, upon the great points of human interest, to see what is the degree of elevation, in the series of development, to which the present age has brought us.

There is this great advantage, moreover, in the principle of common sense, as we have here described it, namely, that philosophy, instead of being dissevered, as it too often is, from all the other branches of literature, is closely and indissolubly connected with them. The opinion is widely entertained, that the aim and purport of the higher

philosophy is to speculate on, quite apart from all sympathy in other men's pursuits—to lay down laws and definitions of its own, to probe simply the individual consciousness within, to draw every thing into its own inexorable chain of logical construction, and to follow thus an ideal pathway with which the common and practical thinking of the world has nothing to do. According to our view of the case, however, philosophy is closely united with human history, with literature, with the common thinking of mankind. The very criterion to which we appeal, obliges the most careful review of past ages; it tells us that we must follow up the whole course of humanity in its development; that we must become familiar with the spirit of every age, and of every people; that we must trace the progress of every class of ideas, and the growth of all the higher intuitions; and, lastly, that we must see how all this has embodied itself historically in art and science, in poetry and in philosophy.

Eclecticism, as that term is usually employed, appeals only to the different *systems* of philosophy: it keeps within the precincts of the formal or the ideal, and is apt to be looked upon, therefore, by the uninitiated, as being merely a method of judging among systems, all of which are alike shadowy and far from the ordinary walks of human thought. Not so, however, with the philosophy of common sense, as it is here understood. We appeal not to any formal systems whatever; we attempt not to

reconcile the statements of one with the propositions of the other; we look upon them all as veritable phenomena, but as phenomena which only take their stand with all the other developments of human thought which lie around us. No! in appealing to the universal consciousness of mankind, we sink down to a lower stratum of thought than that which appears in any system of philosophy whatever; we sink down to that great ocean of ideas which has rolled all these very systems to the light, and which, in turn, passes beyond them all, leaving their stereotyped doctrines as marks of the thinking of times which are gone, and impelling the coming generations to new efforts and the development of new truths.

The philosophy we thus maintain is eminently the philosophy of humanity. It springs forth, first of all, from the deep bosom of humanity. We advocate no shallow sensational empiricism, which contents itself with gazing only upon the surface of passing phenomena; we advocate no unnatural production of over-wrought individual speculation, which may dazzle by its logical acuteness, but fails to edify by its truth; we advocate no groping endeavours to patch up a whole system of truth from the scattered fragments of mere outward tradition; but we ask, What is the function, what the real intellectual fruit of humanity itself? The senses may deceive us, the individual judgment may become perverted, the gleams of tradition amongst the gloom of past ages will be dim and inconstant;

but humanity, its reason, its developments, its intellectual life—these are great facts which no sophistry can pervert, no scepticism deny.

Again; the philosophy we maintain vindicates the cause of humanity on the most reasonable basis. It represents man neither as though he were a nonentity, on the one hand, nor a deity on the other. Far are we from that daring and impious pantheism, which makes the thought of God coincident with the whole thinking of man, and degrades the divine consciousness down to a level with the human. So far, indeed, are we from this, that we see in pantheism only the sickly fruit of overweening individual speculation, never the healthy and spontaneous product of the common reason of mankind. On the other hand, we deny that the human soul is a mere channel, through which objective ideas are made to flow; that man is a passive instrument in the hands of Deity, or that the divine likeness, in which he was created, has ever been utterly erased, however much distorted. No! we see in humanity, wherever it exists, a sacred and an inviolable treasure—one which was not made to be the tool of faction, or the down-trodden vassal of oppression; but the free, the loving, the happy child of a heavenly Parent, the offspring of the Divinity, who is enabled, under the guidance of providence, and by the light of an inward revelation, to fulfil his destiny, and then enjoy his repose.

Once more; the philosophy we maintain aims at the peace and the unity of humanity. It shows us

that mankind is one symmetrical whole, possessing a common reason, a common life—a common hope. It teaches us to look upon all great systems which have numbered men of moral earnestness amongst their followers, as noble efforts of the reason we are endowed with from on high, to solve the problem of human life; efforts, out of which we may gain precious germs of truth, although surrounded oftentimes by error and delusion. And while it holds up the moral and intellectual worth of such endeavours, it does not forget that the very highest faculties, which there come consciously and reflectively into operation, are working spontaneously even among the ignorant and uninstructed, who can claim, accordingly, their share in the intellectual as well as the material organization of society at large.

Finally; the philosophy we maintain asserts the perpetual progress of humanity. It honours the days that are gone by, even as the old man looks fondly upon the sunshine of his youth; it seeks to comprehend and to use the blessings which now exist, without repining at evil or despairing of good; but it looks forward to the time which is yet to come as bearing in its womb an age of clearer light, of more heroic virtue, of purer and serener love, than aught which has yet appeared. Confident in the designs and the omnipotent wisdom of Providence, we seek ever to feed with our philosophy the lamp of human hope—to shield it from the blasts of scepticism—to reflect its holy radiance

over the whole path of human existence. With these principles to guide us, we would ever be serene in the storm, ever brave in the battle of human life. Our motto should ever be that on the tomb-stone at St. Gilgen—

Look not mournfully on the past—it comes not back :  
Enjoy the present—it is thine :  
Go forth to meet the shadowy future with  
A manly heart, and without fear.

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#### POSTSCRIPT TO THE FOURTH LECTURE.

THE most important application of the principles advocated in this Lecture is that which employs them to find a ground of certitude in the domain of religious truth. If there be one thing for which, more than any other, the age we live in is longing and struggling, it is some intelligible expression upon this head. The profession of the full liberty of private judgment, openly made by most Protestant communions, has long been seen and felt, by the thoughtful of all parties, to be little better than a delusion. When fully carried out, it has led almost universally to this decided alternative—“ Either we ought to welcome every honest mind, however wild and extravagant its individual theories and speculations, as having an

equal chance of being right with ourselves, and equally eligible to all the intimacy of Christian fellowship; or, giving up the principle of private judgment altogether, we must cling fast to the living voice of tradition where best it may be heard."

The last ten years have seen many earnest minds accept the latter side of the alternative, as a last resource against the strides of Rationalism, which, with logical foresight, they perceived would soon overtake them. It is very easy and very natural for Protestant Churches to wail and lament over the numerous conversions to Popery, of which we oftentimes hear; but it were far better if, instead of bandying reproaches, or shedding tears over apostasy, they were to gird themselves vigorously to the work of examining their own principles, and see how far *their* indefiniteness may be responsible for such calamities. Suppose an inquiring mind, unable, as the very result of its deep moral and religious earnestness, to take everything upon mere trust, to come humbly and sincerely with the question, "Where am I to repose confidence with respect to the validity of my religious belief?" What answer, I ask, does he receive from almost every Protestant community? The first answer is, "Search the Scriptures." Accordingly he *does* search them. With eagerness, with industry, with prayer, he employs every aid which comes to his hands; and the result, in all probability, is, that he evolves many sentiments differing materially from the system of truth accepted by the Church to

which he belongs. I say, *in all probability*, because perfect agreement with it, when there are so many conflicting opinions built upon these same data, could hardly result from anything else than a traditionary bias. This result, then, he brings to the Church, and presents it as the sincere product of their own principle of private judgment. But how is he received? with joy? with satisfaction? with approbation, as an earnest lover of truth, and a patient seeker for it? Nothing less. He was sent to the Bible not to seek *truth*, but to find in it their own distinctive system; and the error of not finding it there complete is unpardonable. The error, as we think, was really in the *instructors*, who failed to give any intelligible principle of research; and the mournful result is, that *moral earnestness* for truth, which, as a virtue, is infinitely higher than blind submission to authority, is condemned and punished, instead of the false *intellectual principle*, which the inquirer had honestly applied, being kindly corrected. Such are the inevitable evils arising from confounding the moral and intellectual meaning attached to the principle of private judgment.

Driven away, therefore, from the full exercise of private judgment, and accused of nurturing heresy (God knows it is honesty) in his bosom, where does he next look for satisfaction? The only directory which most Protestant Churches give is to the fathers and founders of their own several denominations. But it naturally occurs, Is the opinion of



one set of founders any better than another? Is it not better to go beyond them all, and put trust in the earlier fathers of the Church? Certainly, if human authority is to be the guide, the nearer we go to the well-spring of apostolic teaching the better. Accordingly, the inquiring mind is driven onwards, by the want of any definite principle in his Protestant advisers, into the arms of absolute authority, or at least of ecclesiastical tradition. This process is not a mere imaginary case. It is a case I have witnessed in more instances than one, and that, too, in connection with minds deeply pious and conscientious; but, alas! too logical to be satisfied with a superficial and imperfect response to their souls' inmost yearnings and necessities. I say, therefore, that our Protestantism has this duty incumbent upon it, *either* to allow of private judgment to the uttermost, *or* to think out for itself some intelligible principle, by which the rationalistic results of individualism are to be curbed and prevented.

Such a principle, as regards *philosophical* truth, we have endeavoured to develop in the preceding Lecture; the same principle, as regards religious truth, has yet to be brought into action, as affording some intelligible reply to the inquiring spirit of the age. For ourselves, we have the deepest conviction that the doctrine of intuition, applied to the development of Christianity, gives us a hold upon something *generic, catholic, objectively real*, to which the individual reason, or, as it is often termed, the

private judgment, must necessarily bow. As regards, indeed, our logical consciousness, and consequently, as regards the formal statements of our theology, the individual principle is not to be repelled—and Protestantism has ever felt itself strong in this position; yet, with all the strength of this position, it has ever shrunk from the consequences of individualism, and advocated tacitly some kind of common “*consensus*,” in order to put a drag upon its operations. It has, in fact, been feeling after the principle of a generic, and even a catholic Christian consciousness, though, for want of the true philosophy of intuition, it has not been able fully to realize it. With the aid of this philosophy, we are now able to show the *via media* between ultra-individualism, as involved in the doctrine of private judgment, and traditionary authority, as residing in an external and living infallibility.

Let it be admitted that the objective data of Christian truth are divinely revealed, the question next is as to their interpretation. Now, if it be allowed that Christianity has to overcome all antagonistic evils, and, in the process of its historical development, to come forth clear and brilliant as the light of day, it follows from this, that the living spirit, the whole religious consciousness of humanity in its providential growth, acted on by the divinely-inspired Christian element, is the real expounder and interpreter of the full truth and meaning of Christ's holy religion.

This may involve many individual paradoxes in its

course; but such is the case with the development of every great idea, which ever separates itself into opposite poles, in order to meet again in some higher unity. This is the very life of its being, the rhythm of its history—the steps by which it marches forward to its great and ultimate realization.

To trace these steps, we must study the history of the past, and see the thread of catholic truth weaving itself with a silvery brightness through all the wanderings of those speculations to which the Christian consciousness of the world has given rise. And then, just as we track the mid-way course of the vessel, which makes its way on either tack against the breeze, so shall we see that the Church of the first-born has ever held on her way against heresy, even when apparently deviating from the more direct pathway.

Here, then, we shall find a guide by which to direct the efforts of our logical understanding. Imbued with the vital spirit of Christianity, the pride of reason will receive its due check; just for this cause, that it is made to feel its incapacity to furnish *any real material of holy thought*; and that its efforts are confined to the re-casting, clearing, and bringing into scientific form, the spiritual life which flows direct from God, and permeates, by his divine guidance, the religious consciousness of mankind at large.

On this theme we would fain enlarge, but we promise the reader a more full and formal statement of it, together with many kindred topics, before very

long. We merely throw out these hints as pioneers of what is to follow. To the men who accuse us of "subtlety," we reply, Read and think for yourselves. Far are we from wishing to hide a single thought from the deepest recesses of our bosom. *We, at least*, conceal no secret misgivings, under the cloak of zealous orthodoxy; we tremble not for the cause of truth, from whatever quarter assailed. But still, assuredly, our spirit is not one of subtlety or deceit; we have no faith in anything but moral honesty and Christian candour; and, instead of insinuating one thing and meaning another, our whole reliance is in the "manifestation of the truth to every man's conscience as in the sight of God."

THE END.

BY THE SAME AUTHOR.

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